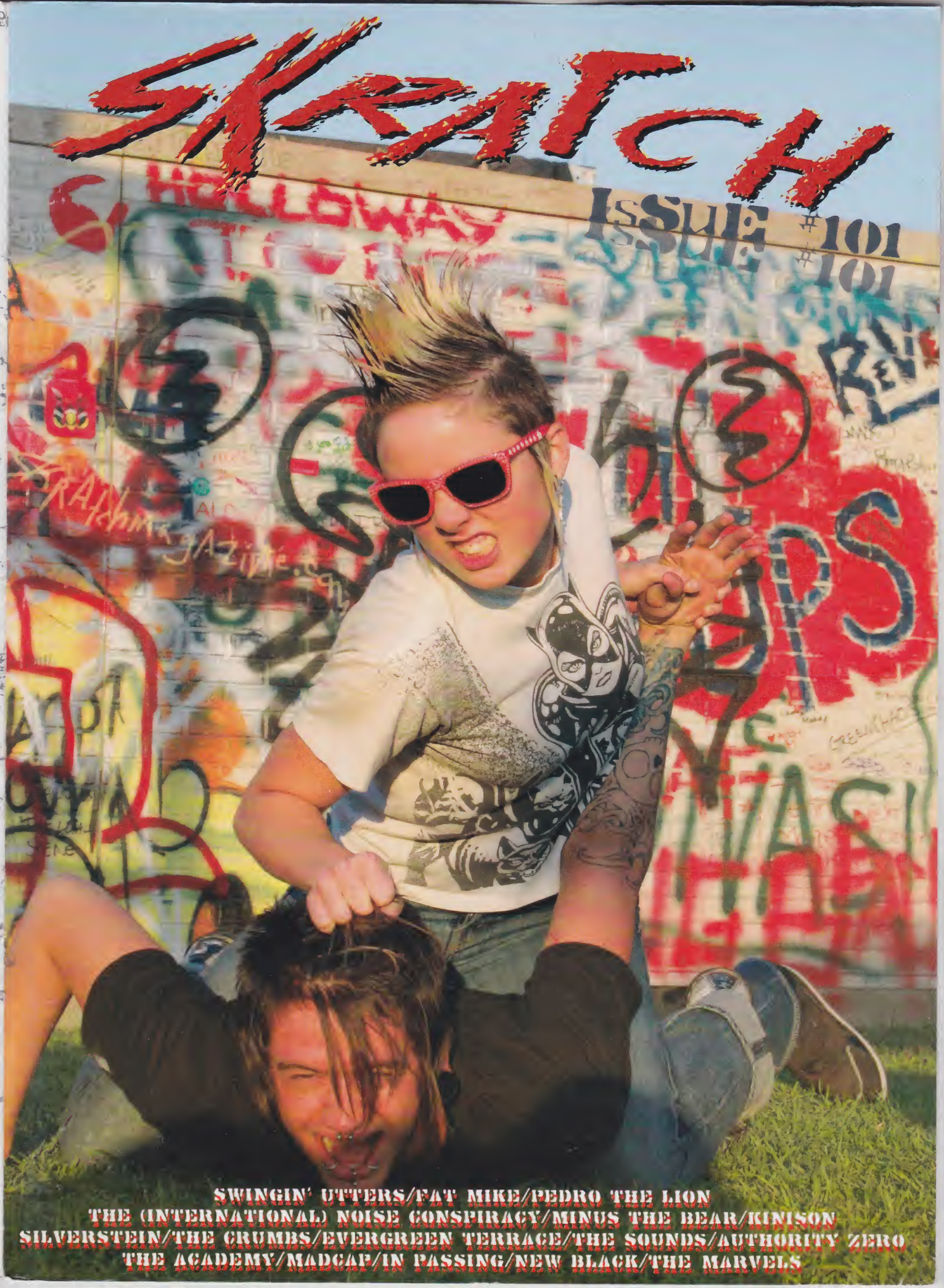

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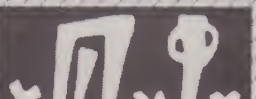
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11	12	13 Two Dollar Tuesday $2.00 draft beer $2.00 Well drinks 2 Tacos $2.00	14	15 THE ATTRACTIONS	16 Parkaimoon	17 THE MAGNATONES
18	19	20 Two Dollar Tuesday $2.00 draft beer $2.00 Well drinks 2 Tacos $2.00	21	22 Desoto	23 The 5150's	24 Emerson
25	26	27 Two Dollar Tuesday $2.00 draft beer $2.00 Well drinks 2 Tacos $2.00	28	29 VEYNA	30 DJS	31 Con Job

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This is another issue with words, photos, and graphics. It is issue #101. Welcome.

scott, skratch
scott@skratchmagazine.com

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MORE PLOPS IN OUR MAILBOX

I really wanted to say how much I like the So Cal music scene. Skratch is a necesity for anyone thats in the music scene and wants to know whats up. I was amazed that so many bands that I liked, were right here in So Cal. I really like that magazine though, I've read it so many times and each time I find something new. I was going to ask my sister to pick one up and send it to me every month. But hey! I can subscribe. Awesome. I live in Arizona, and I visit SOCAL often. I like to know whats going on. I even see my favorite local radio station, and band, in the magazine. 103.9 The Edge & Authority Zero. That's awesome. Well, great job with the magazine.

Sincerely,
Monique

Monique,
I was so incredibly full of joy when I read your letter. I jump-roped. I played hopscotch. I lit a candle. I did good things. I donated to charities I couldn't pronounce. I played with my pet monkey (no, I have a monkey as a pet), I wrote letters to my congressmen, I wrote letters to your congressmen, I ate all of the green M+M's in the special jar next to the large bottle of Oraneg Metamucil, I drove speedily on the open road screaming obscenities/laughing/embracing positivity in my Accord, I ran naked through my neighborhood playing a banjo mouthing the words to a Good Charlotte song (that's a lie), I filled out the crossword puzzles next to the Sunday's funnies, I knitted a sweater with fabrics from Indonesia, I slapped all the faces of the sweatshop owners in town, I played my old Keith Sweat records, I played with my other per monkey, I led a drum circle parade with go-go dancers down Pine Ave. in Long Beach, I played a game of poker with the homeless dude named Carona, I drank five Coronas and sang karoake in a short dress and hells and got my ass kicked so bad I won't even need to tell stories to my kids-I can show them, I went fishing for bass and put every single one back in the ocean to swim swimmingly, I threw dominoes with the homeys and taught them to invest into stocks and bonds, and I sat in a longe chair with a chilled bottle of Tab (only 1 calorie!) and thought to myself - "Self, that Monique, she's a sweetheart. I sure did.

Love,
Scott, Skratch

Hey this is Nick from Sub 6 Radio.com We are a free online radio station that plays unsigned and indie bands from across the country. Some of the labels that are supporting us are Nitro, Fearless, Drive-Thru, and Fat Wreck Chords. We sponsors local shows and where interested in getting your magazine out to the east coast. Also we are interested in getting in your magazine. For more info about us call me at (321)750-3546 and check us out at www.sub6radio.com.

Nick

Nick,
I hate the phone. I spend more time on it than the toilet and that really eats away at me sometimes. I mean, what am I accomplishing on the phone? Not much usually. How many voicemails do I waste erroneous words upon? Sure, I could call you and find out all about the shows you like to sponsors (it's sponsor, no S, Nick) and you can tell me why Skratch should spend hundreds of dollars to ship magazines out to you and your radio station. Then, I can find out later you are selling them at shows for 5 bucks a piece, supporting your wife and three kids, and eating Tyson Pot Pies like hotcakes at IHOP. I could do that. How bouts this? Why don't you call me and send me a big fat check so we do not have to spend the extra cash. I got babies to feed, a girlfriend to buy clothes for, video games to play, porn to rent, ice cream to eat (what is it with ice cream this month?), rent, teeth whitening, stomach tucks, a vasectomy, teeth fillings, gold rims to purchase, places to travel, 99 problems but a bitch ain't one, events to fund, and stuff. Okay? Am I bitter?

Yeah, So just give me a call, k? Ummmm..Tyson Pot Pies. I gotz to get me soome of dat shit (why do I always turn hip-hop? Someone write a letter and diagnos/analyze me please. My letters there so, so...ummmm all over the place. I need to become a more grounded writer. What's my problem. Focus. Yes, I need to buy a Ford Focus. No! I need to more focus.)

Later,
Scott, Skratch

favorite quote from our crapbox:

"Damn, this piece of shit printer. Hey Matt! Where's the printer toner?Shit!" -production team @ skratch

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{interviews}

in order of appearance:

SWINGIN' UTTERS
FAT MIKE
PEDRO THE LION
THE (INTERNATIONAL) NOISE CONSPIRACY
MINUS THE BEAR
KINISON
SILVERSTEIN
THE CRUMBS
EVERGREEN TERRACE
THE SOUNDS
AUTHORITY ZERO
THE ACADEMY
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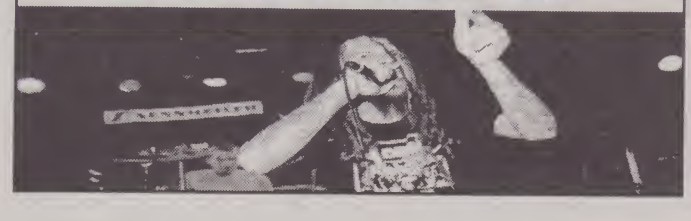

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SWINGIN' UTTERS
Interview by the Jeff Penalty

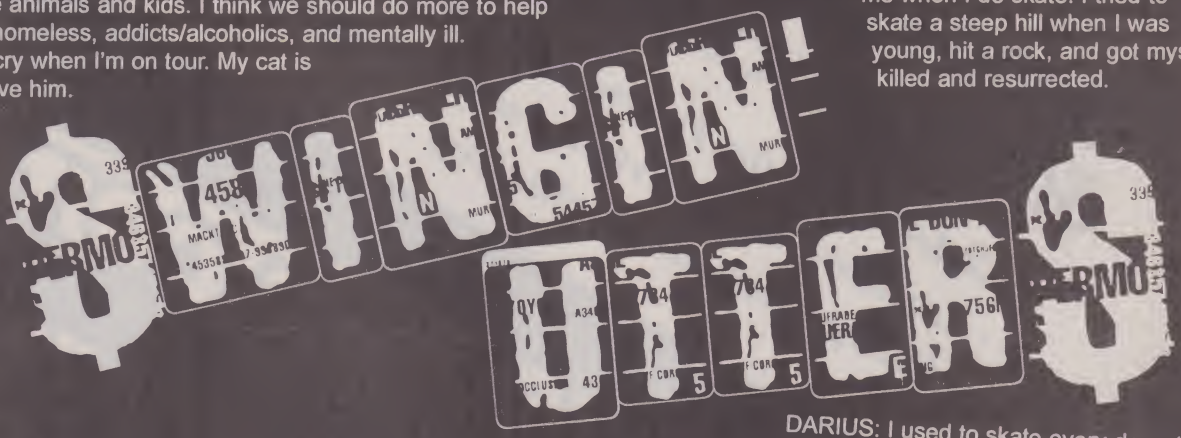
I honestly don't know what to say to introduce this interview. If you're not interested in what Swingin' Utters have to say, well, Jesus Christ, what does a band have to do to spark your curiosity?! They've put out a mess of records, toured all over the world with tons of prominent bands, signed to Fat Wreck Chords...Are you really that jaded? For all of our sakes, just pretend you're not and read the following transcript of my e-mail interview with singer Johnny Bonnel, guitarist Darius Koski, and drummer Greg McEntee. It's entertaining and educational, and it's good for your bones and teeth. I promise!

SKRATCH: Swingin' Utters have a pretty tough image. Can you tell me something about each member of the band that reveals their softer or more sensitive side?
DARIUS: Johnny and I are both married with little kids. I like a lot of wimpy, sensitive music like Townes Van Zandt and Elliott Smith, and Johnny's shy. Spike likes to sing Stevie Wonder songs and enjoys cooking. Greg's just kinda tough.
GREG: I like animals and kids. I think we should do more to help the elderly, homeless, addicts/alcoholics, and mentally ill.
JOHNNY: I cry when I'm on tour. My cat is gay, and I love him.

SKRATCH: Darius, I heard that you're a butcher on the side. Did you ever see that movie DELICATESSEN? Do you think you could cut up and eat a human if times were really tough?
DARIUS: DELICATESSEN was great. [...] As far as cannibalism, I don't know—but if you've gotta eat, you've gotta eat.

SKRATCH: Johnny and Greg, are you ever scared that Darius might chop you up in your sleep and feed you to the rest of the band?
JOHNNY: I hope he does it quick. I'm starving over here.
GREG: No, but I fear him nightcrawling.
DARIUS: Okay, let me explain. I enjoy cuddling at night when I go to bed, and I've been known to attempt the occasional drunken spooning session with an unsuspecting band member (all in good fun, of course).

SKRATCH: A Swingin' Utters skate deck was recently released. Does anyone in the band actually skate? What's the worst injury sustained by someone in the band as a result of skating?
JOHNNY: I'm not good, but my friends love to make fun of me when I do skate. I tried to skate a steep hill when I was young, hit a rock, and got myself killed and resurrected.

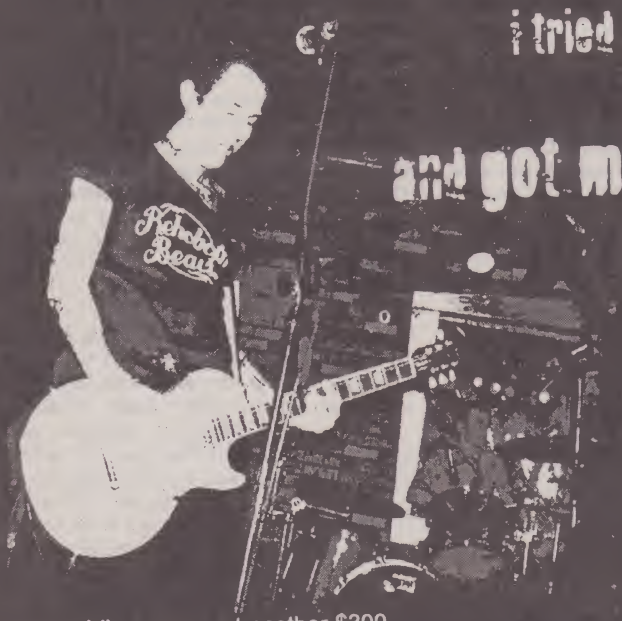


DARIUS: I used to skate every day....but that was about 18 years ago (yikes!). I don't think I've really skated since I was 15 or 16. I fucked up my tailbone (okay: my ass) pretty good once, and I had to stop for a while and never picked it up again. It sucks to get hurt in the ass.
GREG: I'm skating again after a 10-year break. I guess I'm okay, 'cause I recently went to Santa Cruz and skated some bowls at a skate park and didn't eat shit. It took some time to get used to the new small boards, but I also long-board. My worst injuries were slamming my knees, wrists—the usual stuff.

SKRATCH: You just got back from Europe. What's one way in which Europe is superior to America, and what's one way America that is superior to Europe?
DARIUS: [...] They've both got their strong points, but at this point in time, Europe sounds pretty damn good to me, because the U.S.A. has gotten pretty seriously fucked up. We need to do some major damage control and get Bush out of office, because he's a sadistic criminal, and he's (or the U.S. is, rather) directly

influencing the rest of the world in a really negative way.
GREG: Europeans are not as confrontational and violent as Americans. They are not afraid to dance or enjoy the music, because they are not as image-conscious as we are. Also, in Europe, elderly, poor, and sick people are treated better than in the States. I love the U.S.A., but I do not agree with how our government functions. It does not make sense to me. How obvious is it that we are all human beings and should all be happy and healthy?

SKRATCH: Anyone who's been paying attention knows that—as it says on your Website—George Bush sucks; but can you describe why he sucks to people who HAVEN'T been paying attention?
JOHNNY: He done wiped his colon powell with the Constitution. GOD is his biggest influence. Need I say more?
DARIUS: Where do you start? I mean, really. He wasn't really elected to office but became our president anyway. Not only did he lose the popular vote, but I think it's pretty painfully obvious that he rigged the election with a little help from his brother (Florida!); and it's just another day at the office as far as politicians go. I mean, they get away with so much horrible shit. It's all swept under the rug. News channels are in cahoots with 'em and stop reporting on whatever heinous thing was done. I



i tried to skate a steep hill when i was young, hit a rock, and got myself killed and resurrected.

don't think he's intelligent enough to actually make decisions about anything, and I think he's just a mouthpiece, a puppet for people like Cheney and other cronies who maybe none of us have even heard of. How can a U.S. president be a horrible, horrible public speaker with a bad vocabulary? He hardly ever gives press conferences because he's too fucking stupid to answer questions thoughtfully. He's all about private interests, he's all about making money for himself and his bros (Halliburton?). It's like an evil frat-party nightmare. He started a fucking war in Iraq under totally false pretenses. Why the hell are we in Iraq? Where did that brilliant idea come from? There is an endless stream of dishonest, two-faced, really hideously cruel things this guy's administration has done and is planning to do. I hope everybody's ready for new abortion laws and the draft, more tax cuts (Hurray! I'm gonna get another $300 check, and even more social programs are gonna get axed! Education isn't important at all!). And then there's the psychotic Christian crap. Ugh. Visit Punkvoter.com, listen to Michael Moore, whatever. It's pretty embarrassing that this man's our president, and it's getting scarier every day. It's just downright terrifying.
GREG: People have the right to like or hate President Bush. I don't believe he has experienced life on a level most citizens have, and that prevents him from making decisions most of us will agree with. I think about the future of the planet and all humans on it. If that makes me a liberal, then that's fine, and I am proud of it. I hope one day we can elect a true humanitarian to run our government.

SKRATCH: Tell me about the live CD coming out at the end of June.
JOHNNY: No, go buy it and find out.
DARIUS: It was recorded in May of 2003 at the Troubadour. Great show. I think there's 23 songs, and I'm drunk on every last one of 'em. Bravo, Darius, bravo!
GREG: [...] It comes with a comic book that a very old friend of ours drew. I'm so stoked to have a comic book and a skate deck for our band. I love merch.

SKRATCH: Everyone knows you guys are huge Clash fans. Aside from them, if there were one band that you could tour with that you haven't toured with yet, who would it be and why?
JOHNNY: The Spits, 'cause they're the shits. How about Ima Robot, British Sea Power, [or] The Strokes?
GREG: This is always a hard question to answer. The Pogues have asked us to do their Christmas tour of Britain and Ireland in 2004. This is a huge honor, and I will probably freak out if it actually happens, 'cause I grew up listening to them.
DARIUS: Well, we haven't officially been offered the tour yet; we've just been submitted for it...so it's a possibility. I met Spider Stacy a few months ago, and we really hit it off and have remained in contact. He showed up to our show with NOFX in London a month ago, and that's all just been a big deal to me, because I put that band up there with The fucking Beatles...just a huge influence on me and my songwriting. Opening for The Pogues in the U.K. would be our greatest moment, I think.

Man, that would be pretty sweet, opening for The Pogues. I've got my fingers crossed for them. You'll be able to hear an approximation of what that show might sound like on SWINGIN' UTTERS: LIVE IN A DIVE, available on June 29th...except that when they open for The Pogues, they'll probably be even drunker, so I've got my fingers crossed for their liver-transplant operations, too. Good luck on both counts, guys!

ROCK AGAINST BUSH
By Darren Reid Smoot

As the frontman for NOFX and founder of Fat Wreck Chords, Fat Mike needs little introduction to the average punk-rock fan. NOFX albums such as WHITE TRASH, TWO HEEBS AND A BEAN, and PUNK IN DRUBLIC are considered classics that helped forge the punk sound of the '90s—along with Lagwagon, Strung Out, and other bands that Fat Mike has promoted through his record label. That's not what Fat Mike wants to talk about today. In fact, the members of NOFX have not wanted to talk about themselves to media for several years now due to fears of overexposure and misrepresentation. So why now the sudden accessibility to media interviews? Why is Fat Mike, underground punk icon, being quoted in mainstreams like NEWSWEEK? One reason: President George W. Bush. Fat Mike has turned his attention to ousting Bush from the White House this November, and he has assembled dozens of punk bands for assistance. The result is ROCK AGAINST BUSH, a two-volume compilation of songs railing against the Bush Administration and its policies.

SKRATCH recently spoke with Fat Mike about the compilation and the accompanying tour, featuring NOFX, Alkaline Trio, Jello Biafra, and Authority Zero.

SKRATCH: How are you doing today?
FAT MIKE: I just got off the fucking phone with England, [with] some interviewer out there. He was being a fucking prick. He was being very argumentative.

SKRATCH: When did you decide to put together this compilation and tour?
FAT MIKE: The compilation I thought of in 2001. I know more punk bands than anybody, so I figured I should just call them up and have them do this compilation because I think that if kids see that shitloads of bands are standing up against Bush, maybe they'll want to find out more why: because he's a fucking asshole.

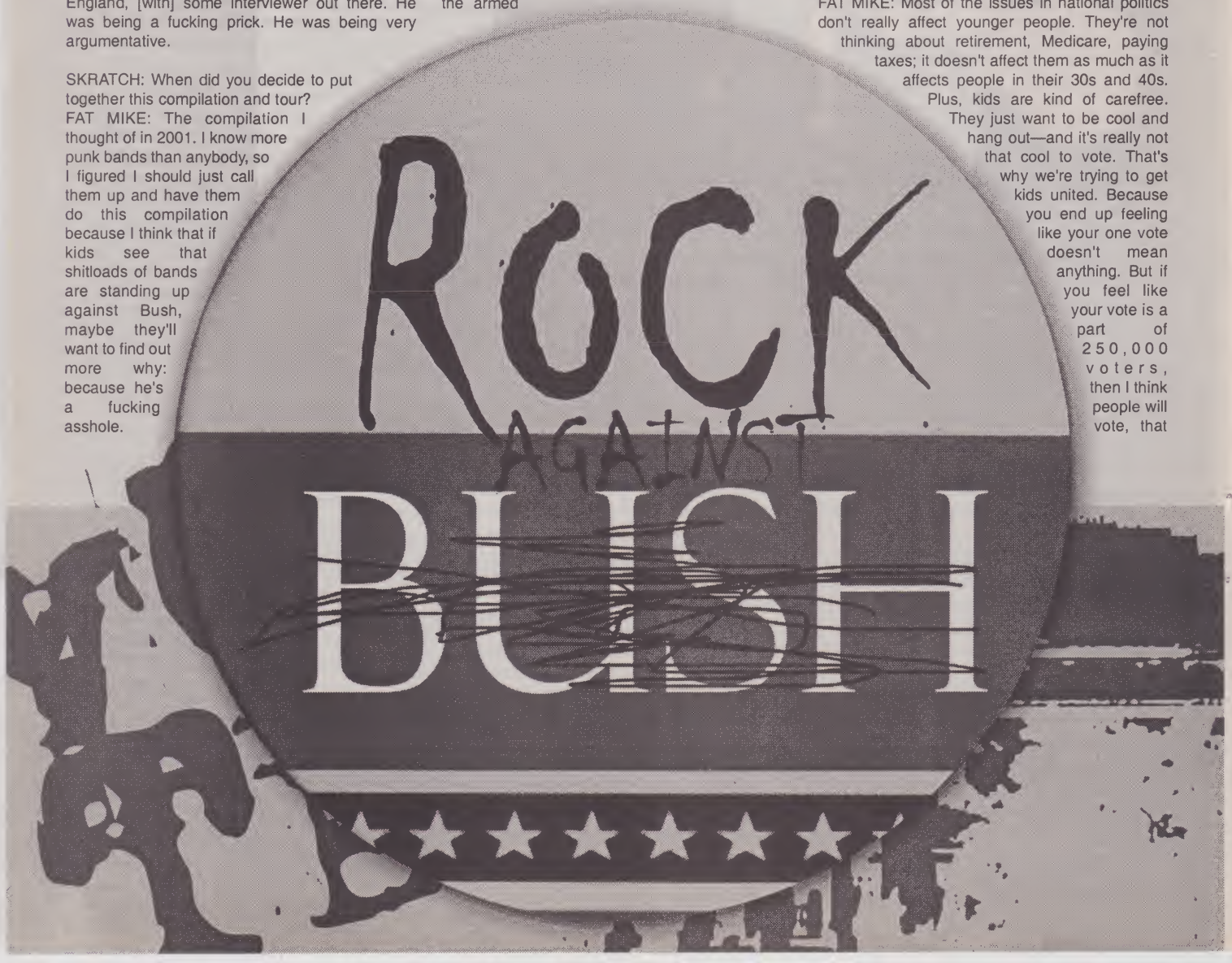
SKRATCH: Was there any hesitancy on the part of the bands that you asked to be on the comp?
FAT MIKE: I don't know how many bands I asked, but maybe three said no out of maybe a hundred bands I asked.

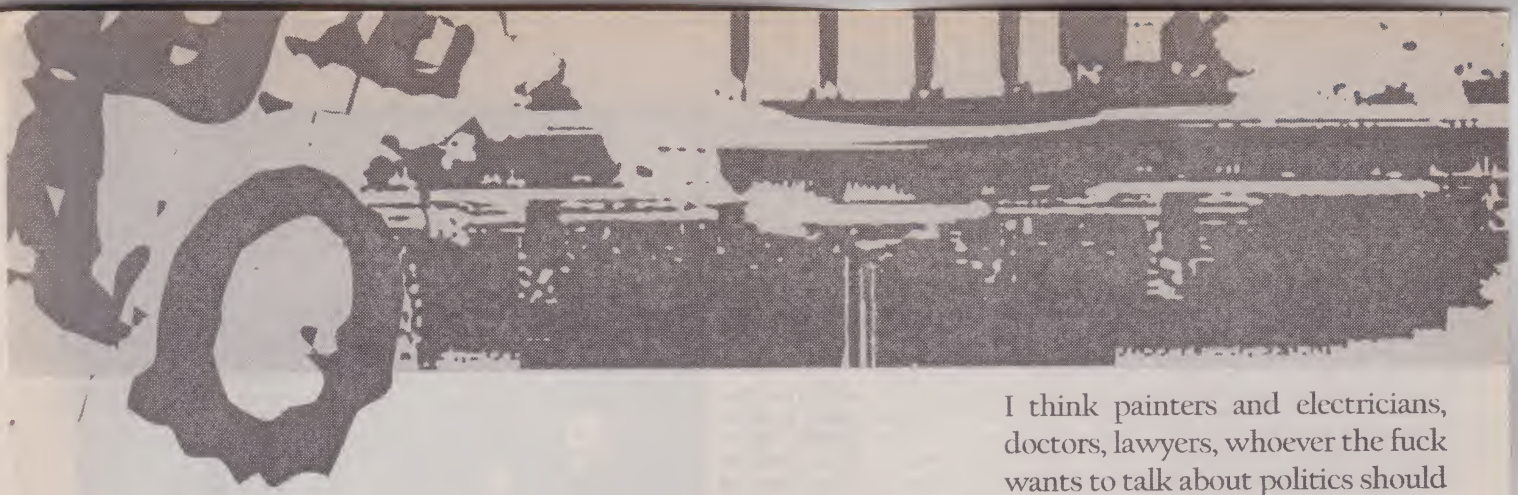
SKRATCH: May I ask which three bands those were?
FAT MIKE: No, but two of them are from Orange County.

SKRATCH: What policies of the Bush Administration do you oppose?
FAT MIKE: There's quite a few. The big one, I guess, is Iraq, taking this country to war under lies and false pretenses. Starting a war with a country that was no threat to us, that even the CIA and FBI told the Bush Administration that they were no threat to us (or a very little threat to us) and there were no weapons of mass destruction. Even if there were, we sold them to them in the '80s; Reagan did. I don't like how 3 million Americans have lost their jobs since [Bush has] been in office. I don't like how he has cut overtime for over 8 million Americans. I don't like his policy on abortion. He's already made 11 executive actions against reproductive rights, and I strongly believe he is going to make abortion illegal in this country if he wins the next election, because he gets to appoint two Supreme Court justices—at LEAST two. And if they get a high enough majority, they're going to overturn Roe v. Wade. I think he is going to reinstitute the draft, because I know people in the armed forces, and everyone's quitting because no one wants to fight in this stupid fucking war—because even though the war is supposed to be over, people are still dying and we're still occupying. I don't like how he turns the biggest surplus in American history into the biggest deficit in American history by giving $300 checks to everybody. I mean, that is childish. That is really bad economics and bad politics. No, it's good politics! He got people to vote for him by saying, "I'll give you money back."

SKRATCH: Some people argue that artists, musicians, and/or celebrities shouldn't be speaking out about politics. What do you think?
FAT MIKE: Those people...I don't know how to say it politely, but they're just off base, they're fucking idiots. This is America, and anyone who wants to get involved in politics is allowed to. Everyone has a right to say what they want to say. Artists and musicians shouldn't be involved? Yeah, right—let's just leave it to the millionaire businessmen...because that's who politicians are. Are they supposed to be experts? No. I think cab drivers should speak out; I think painters and electricians, doctors, lawyers, whoever the fuck wants to talk about politics should talk politics. Not to mention that nowadays it's not even about politics: it's about morality. I believe that artists and musicians have a higher sense of morality than politicians.

SKRATCH: Do you believe that young voters are generally apathetic towards politics? If so, why?
FAT MIKE: Most of the issues in national politics don't really affect younger people. They're not thinking about retirement, Medicare, paying taxes; it doesn't affect them as much as it affects people in their 30s and 40s. Plus, kids are kind of carefree. They just want to be cool and hang out—and it's really not that cool to vote. That's why we're trying to get kids united. Because you end up feeling like your one vote doesn't mean anything. But if you feel like your vote is a part of 250,000 voters, then I think people will vote, that





it's their responsibility to chip in. If we would have done this in 2000, maybe the election would have gone differently.

SKRATCH: When did you first become politically active?
FAT MIKE: I've been politically conscious ever since I went to high school, but I only got politically active after the 2000 presidential election. I decided to try and organize bands together and start a Website. Florida was an absolutely fixed election, and Americans seem to not pay attention to that. Tens of thousands of people were taken off the voter rolls because of their last names; tens of thousands of black people were taken off the voter rolls. It's all there—you've just got to look for the information. On the compilation, there's a 10-minute trailer that shows how this is all done by the Republicans.

SKRATCH: Where would you encourage the average American to get their news from?
FAT MIKE: I encourage the average American to read the fucking newspaper. All I do is read THE NEW YORK TIMES online and AOL online. I don't go to the liberal left-wing news sources; I just look at the regular news, and you find out stuff. The problem is that people don't look at the news, people don't care. You can't watch the 11 o'clock news on your TV, because they don't tell you shit. Go to THE DAILY SHOW WITH JON STEWART. That has good news, too. I mean, not good news—[it's] usually bad news—but it's valid news. Go to punkvoter.com. We put up news stories all the time.

SKRATCH: How will your political activism be affected if Bush wins or loses?
FAT MIKE: If he wins, I think I will cry for a few days, [but then] I'll just keep on doing what I do. We plan on keeping punkvoter.com going for a while.

SKRATCH: Do you think Bush will win?
FAT MIKE: No. His father's approval ratings were much higher than his at the same time [in their presidency], and his father lost pretty bad. Bush's numbers are much lower than they were six months, and they're continuing to slide. I think the Democrats and the liberals of this country are really organizing. They're not gonna just let this happen again. In the year 2000 they didn't organize. Nobody thought he would win. Guess what? He didn't win! [Laughs] But he still moved into the White House! I don't think he'll do it again.

I think painters and electricians, doctors, lawyers, whoever the fuck wants to talk about politics should talk politics. Not to mention that nowadays it's not even about politics: it's about morality.

SKRATCH: Do you think the Democrats have mounted an effective opposition to Bush these past few years?
FAT MIKE: Well, I think the Democrats have been pretty spineless, especially after the 2000 election, when they said, "Let's re-count these four counties." They should've re-counted Florida, [as it's] state law in Florida to re-count the whole state by hand. They let that bitch Katherine Harris get away with not doing that. They should have not given up.

SKRATCH: Well, I appreciate your time. I know you're not a big fan of interviews.
FAT MIKE: I fucking hate it. I hate politics, too. I'm just doing it because I feel I have to.

SKRATCH: Anything else you'd like to say?
FAT MIKE: Support the ROCK AGAINST BUSH comp when it comes out. The better it does on the BILLBOARD charts, the more of a statement it makes to America.

Pedro the Lion
By Dave Kargol

Pedro the Lion's David Bazan, in the glaring eyes of many indie-rock devotees, is a songwriter whose name carries a mark of profound distinction. Like only a few of the contemporary scene's other lauded singer/songwriters (such as Bright Eyes' Conor Oberst and The Weakerthans' John K. Samson), Bazan's superb narrative skills and immaculate songwriting talents truly separate him from the flock and place him in a pasture all his own. Long prior to the late-May release of his fourth studio full-length, ACHILLES HEEL (Jade Tree), the 28-year-old musical visionary had more than established his harmonic flair and bleeding spiritual insight on 1998's IT'S HARD TO FIND A FRIEND. Although Pedro the Lion's most polished—and, at times, most upbeat—album to date, ACHILLES HEEL breaks the theme-based mold of PTL's last two LPs (WINNERS NEVER QUIT and CONTROL) and ventures into 11 remarkably varied songs with no linear storyline in sight.

While in North Carolina—far from his wife and the dog he share's with his housemate—Bazan burnt up a Godspeed You Black Emperor! song's serving of cell phone minutes speaking with SKRATCH.

SKRATCH: Not too long ago, you played a handful of shows under the title of "The Paperback." How come?
DAVID: Basically, I just wanted to play some shows solo, and when I got the offer to open up five or six shows for Bright Eyes, they were all sold out, so it didn't really matter what I called myself—so I just thought I'd just call it this other thing just for fun.

SKRATCH: You have an amazing knack for storytelling. Can you name a few of your favorite storytellers?
DAVID: Oh, thank you. That guy J.D. Sallinger's NINE STORIES book really made a big impact on me. Just how he uses so few words and so little dialogue to convey a lot of emotional history between people. I really like it. I really like that guy Charlie Kaufman a lot (who's a screenwriter), as well as Paul Thomas Anderson.

SKRATCH: Can you explain the significance of the new album's title?
DAVID: Well, we were kind of at a loss for a record title, which isn't all that normal. Usually we have that way before we finish writing the songs. We had like five or six of them, and then I just came up with "ACHILLES HEEL," and it just seemed classic. I liked the way that the words sounded. It was really pleasing-sounding and interesting-looking on paper, and it had to do with vulnerability and weakness, which I liked. But there was no master plan. It was just sort of all those factors combined.

SKRATCH: A lot of your songs seem to be laced with concerns regarding the American family and the American way of life in general. Is that at all accurate?
DAVID: Being an American and having a bit of a family, yeah, I mean, those are concerns of mine—why it doesn't work all the time and why sometimes it does work and all that. I'm concerned with that, so it think it just naturally comes out.

SKRATCH: How do you respond to any sort of backlash that may have resulted within your Christian fan base as a result of the weightier language and content on the new album and CONTROL?
DAVID: Well, I understand. I think people should listen to what they want to and what they feel comfortable listening to, so it doesn't totally bother me. By the same token, I kind of need to write what I'm going to write and not really worry about all of that. But it's interesting. Initially, on that first tour after CONTROL, people were pretty aggressive after the shows about it. I felt bad for them. I felt like they felt betrayed or something. But as far as it affects me now—to whatever degree I think about it—it doesn't really affect me that much, except just feeling apathetic toward them—but not so to the point where I would change anything I do.

SKRATCH: It seems like you've been a little bit more loose with the profanity recently. Do you think God is making hash marks on some white wall up in heaven?
DAVID: No, I certainly don't. I think that people are concerned about that stuff. I think too much is made of that. It's a really arbitrary and subjective social thing, and there is no transcendent truth in the idea that certain words are evil or certain words aren't. It's just here and now in this century and this place. It's so arbitrary. I think people really get worked up over stuff that is just of no consequence at all. [Laughs]

SKRATCH: Do you feel obligated in any way to regulate the numbers of Christian references in your songs? Does it bother you that some people probably want you to talk about God more and others less?
DAVID: No, it doesn't. Occasionally I'm aware of those desires in people, but I really just feel like it's important to me to write what comes out and not worry about that thing either way. Because which one would I choose? It would just be terrible if I tried to take cues from people like that, so I really try not to.

SKRATCH: I've heard a lot of people asking about whether or not you are ever going to publish any writing. Is there anything new to share regarding this?
DAVID: Um, no. It's all pretty much songs and stuff. I don't really have any catalog of other writing that's just waiting. I have journals and stuff like that, but those would certainly not be worthy of anything like that—so there's nothing else to publish.

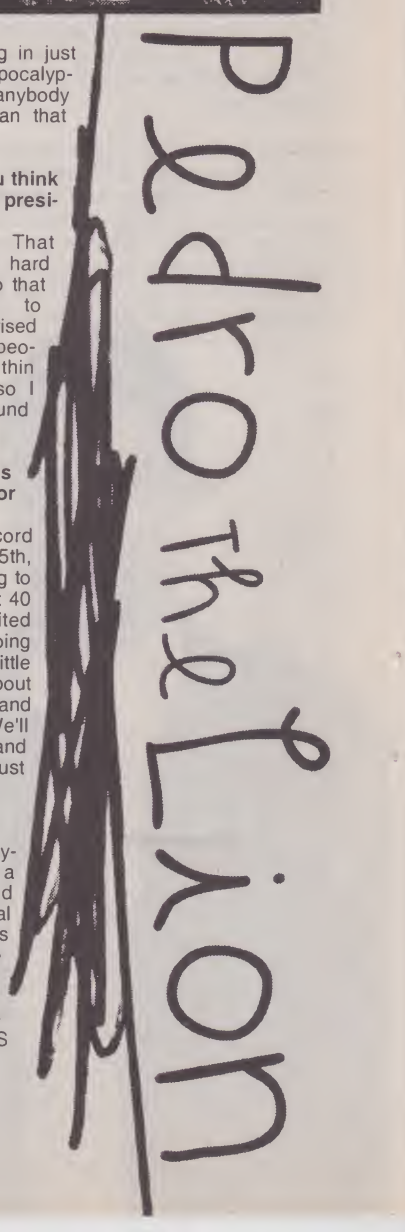
SKRATCH: I know that some people are very interested in your political philosophies. Do you personally find it difficult to find representation in the American two-party system?
DAVID: Definitely. I don't think that either party really has the people's interest in mind, and I think that's unfortunate. I think that a few years ago I sort of, through reading and other things and talking to some certain people, became somewhat of a liberal—but I think maybe even left of the Democratic Party, particularly since Bill Clinton. I think a lot of people are in a tough spot these days as far as that goes. I think those guys are all pretty well full of shit, and I think that the one we've got now is outstanding in how full of shit he is. It's a tough, pretty despairing subject.

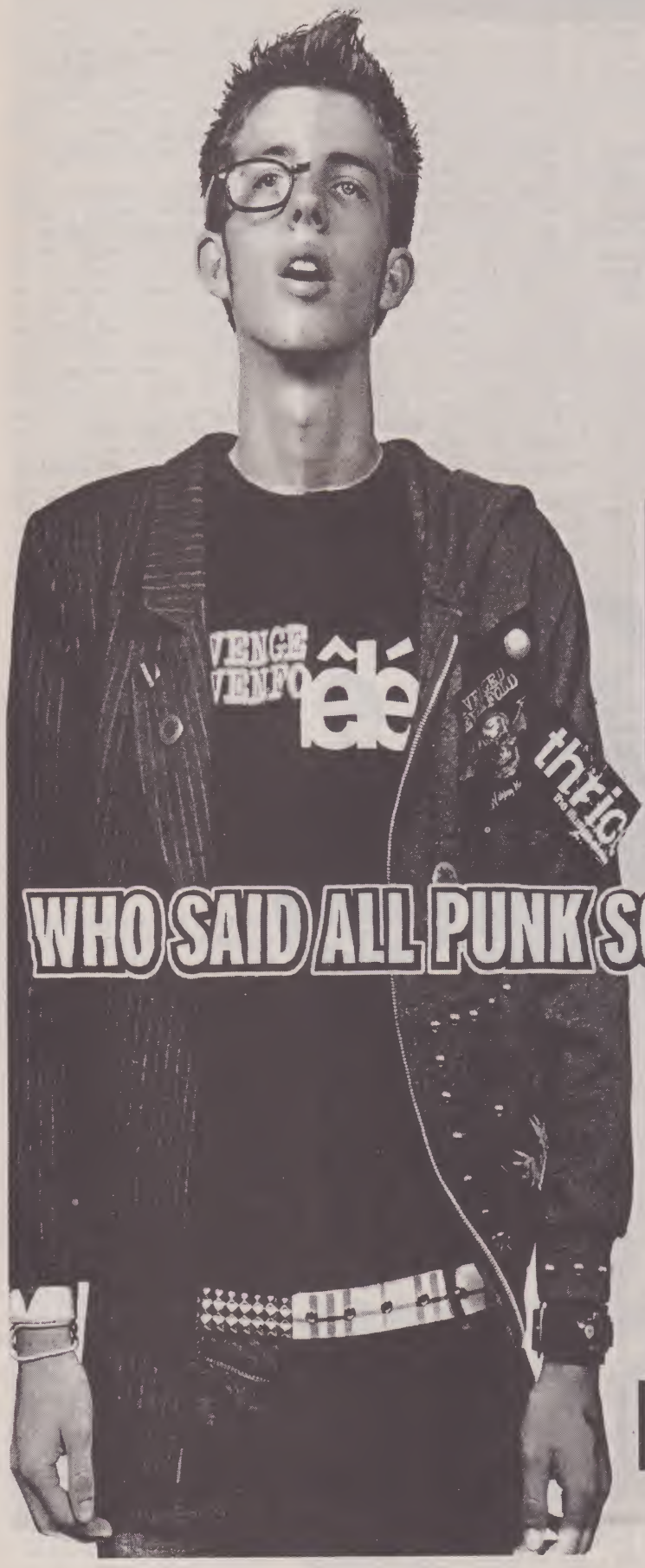
SKRATCH: Do you plan on voting in November?
DAVID: Yeah, I'll vote. I really want that guy to be out, George W. Bush, so I'll probably vote for Kerry, I guess. I don't care for him all that much more. I think he's a...I don't know. You don't want to be a judgmental prick, but after you get taken for a ride so many times, you just stop trusting whatever rich motherfucker is running for elected office. Do you really have the will of the people in mind? It's just hard to believe. But I think that he would certainly be better than W and his buddies Rove and Cheney and all of those guys. They just have a master plan that is really scary and kind of exciting in just how futuristic and apocalyptic it is. I feel like anybody would be better than that guy at this point.

SKRATCH: Will you think about running for president yourself?
DAVID: Um, no. That seems like a really hard job. I think to get to that point you have to become very comprised as a person. Those people have really thin souls, I feel like, so I don't want to be around that.

SKRATCH: What's next on the list for Pedro the Lion?
DAVID: The record comes out May 25th, and then we're going to go on tour for about 40 days in the United States, then we're going to go on tour a little while after that for about 30 days in Europe, and then that's it. We'll make more records and continue to tour—just the same old cycle.

Swing by the newly-redesigned for a mp3s, photos, and tour dates. A special Website, , offers exclusive Pedro the Lion downloads, in-studio photographs, and a stream of the entire ACHILLES HEEL album.





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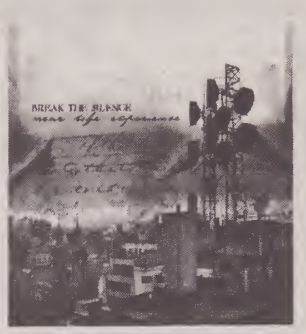

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WHO SAID ALL PUNK SOUNDS THE SAME?

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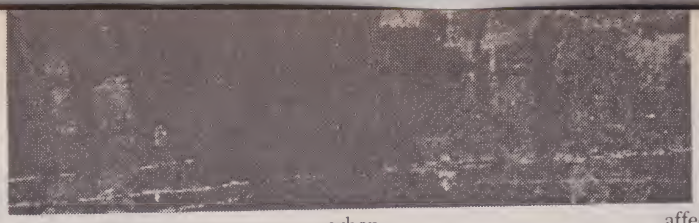


The (International) Noise Conspiracy
Interview by Dan Boczarski

It's been nearly two years since we last heard from The (International) Noise Conspiracy. The radically soulful Swedish rock outfit has been on a hiatus for a while, but they are back and ready to unleash their latest attack on capitalist ideals with their third album, ARMED LOVE. After signing to American Recordings, the band collaborated with famous producer Rick Rubin and continued their usage of catchy rhythms and politically-charged lyrics to create yet another amazing record.

We had a chance to sit down and talk with vocalist Dennis Lyxzén during a stop on their tour to bring you the scoop on what's going on with the band. (For the complete interview, head to www.skratch-magazine.com.)

SKRATCH: You've had a pretty extensive break since your last tour in the U.S. How do you feel about returning, and how has the audience reaction been so far?
DENNIS: It's been pretty good. It's hard, because we're playing almost all new songs. It'd be easy to do all the songs people recognize and get people crazy and excited. You'll feel really good about yourself and be like, "Yeah, everybody loves us"; but it's hard to just go out and play new songs, because people will be like, "What the hell's going on here?" But so far people have been excited about the new songs and shows have been really cool, considering the fact we don't have a record out.

SKRATCH: Your new record is coming out soon. What are your feelings about it, and how is it different from your previous releases?
DENNIS: It's pretty exciting. It's really heavy if you compare it to the old stuff, it's really loud and heavy. You know that feeling that with every record you take a step forward? It feels like we've taken five steps forward on this record.

SKRATCH: So musically it's different, then?
DENNIS: Yeah, but when we play shows, people respond really well; and I don't think it's a huge departure. I don't think people are going to be, like, "Oh, it doesn't sound like (International) Noise Conspiracy anymore." But no, it's way heavier, and the songwriting feels more solid.

SKRATCH: The album was produced by Rick Rubin. How was the experience working with him?
DENNIS: It was good times. He knows what he wants and what he can extract from the band. He's really cool. It was a great learning process. He's like a living legend when it comes to doing records. He's done some amazing music, so it was pretty awesome to get to work with a guy like that.

SKRATCH: You get a political message across during your show, and hopefully the audience leaves with a changed mindset and new political ideas and emotions. What can people do from there to take that first step towards revolution?
DENNIS: What we want to do is [...] inspire people to become creative and think about the world around them and see the connections between how we feel and why there's a war in Iraq and the economical structures that we have. We want people to realize there is a connection between the fact that every presidential candidate for the last hundreds of years in the U.S. has been a white, upper-class, middle-aged man. We want to plant the seed and make people see that the politics of the world is something that affects us every day and that we're actually a part of this big community that is the world. A lot of times, especially in a country like America that's so big, it's hard to feel like you can accomplish anything, but we have to realize that the people are actually the basic foundation of this society. A lot of stuff we talk about is very specific maybe from our background, culture, class, or where we come from and so on. You have to find your own sense of purpose and your own place within this big whole and try to start from there. And if that means you start a zine, band, or you organize a protest, read a book, talk to your parents, change your diet...There's a lot of small things you can do, and hopefully it'll ripple out and make more people excited.

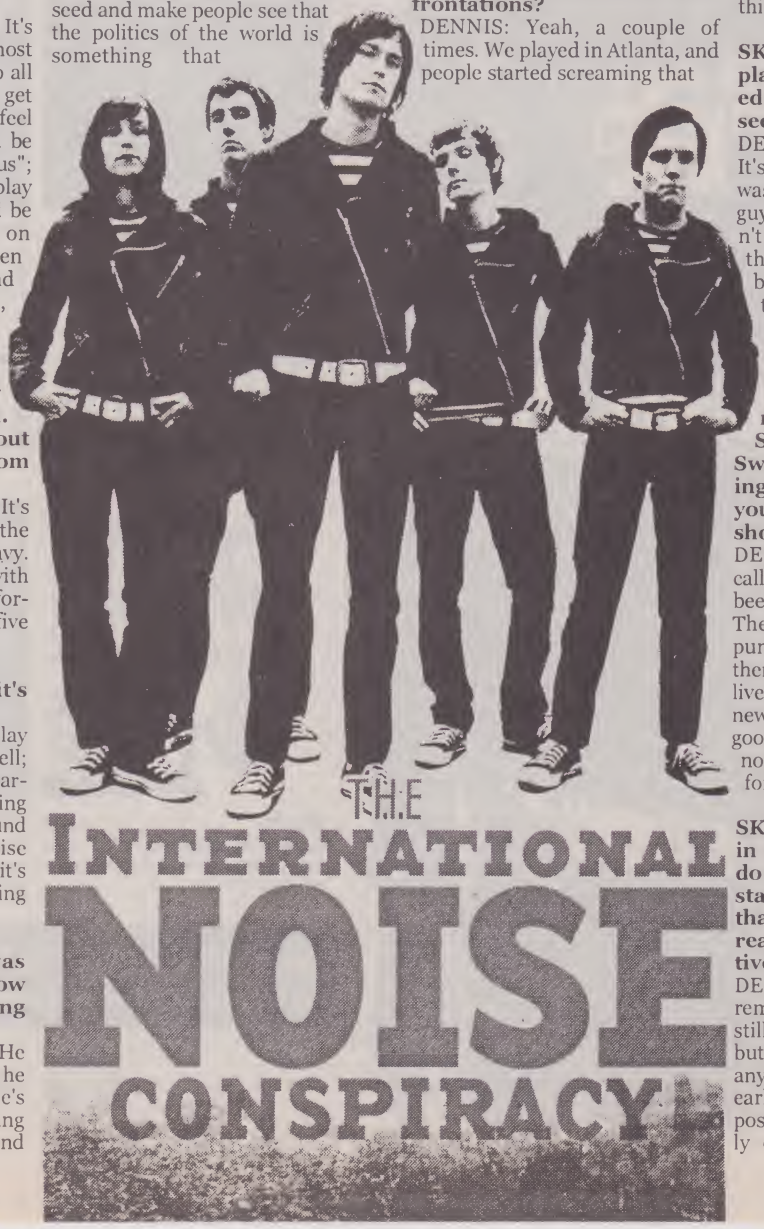
SKRATCH: I'm sure you often have people at shows opposing your views. Have there ever been any serious confrontations?
DENNIS: Yeah, a couple of times. We played in Atlanta, and people started screaming that we were on the Taliban side, and we were just like, "What?!" [Laughs] Because we talked about 9/11 and we tried to come with an outsider's perspective on why it happened and how the rest of the world could see it happen before it happened. We just tried to show that there is another perspective, and people were pissed off. They were screaming, "Love it or leave it," and they wanted to fight us.

SKRATCH: Sounds like there's some pretty closed-minded people down there.
DENNIS: Yeah, it's weird. Even if a lot of people don't agree with our politics, they know where we stand, so it's equally confusing for me every night when I talk shit about George Bush and people get offended. You knew that was going to happen, so why are you being upset? [Laughs] But it'd be strange if we played a show and everyone would agree with what we're saying, because that would defeat the whole purpose of what we're talking about, which is that no politician, musician, or teacher can actually teach you what the world is. You should have to question everything.

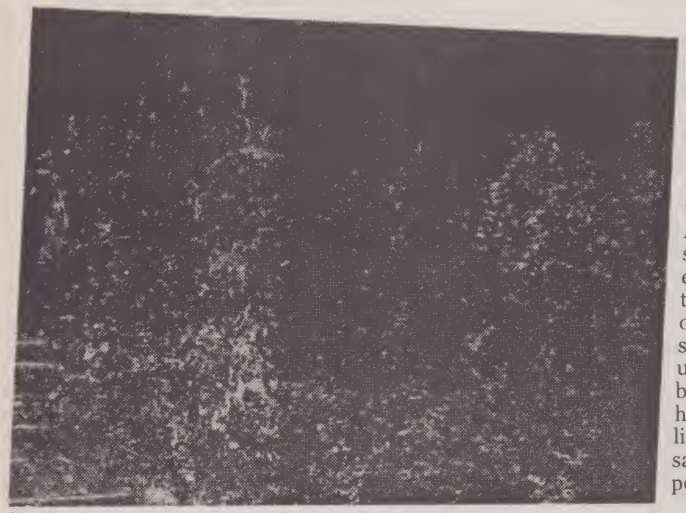
SKRATCH: Your guitar/organ player, Sara, recently departed from the band. Are you seeking a replacement?
DENNIS: No, you can't replace her. It's just not going to happen—she was way too cool. We got a standing guy playing organ for tour. We didn't have anyone to play organ on the record. We actually had a bunch of hired guns. So no, it's the four of us now, until we feel that we're ready to do something different.

SKRATCH: All the bandmembers hail from Sweden. Lately, a lot of Swedish acts have been finding popularity in the U.S. Do you have any favorites that we should be looking forward to?
DENNIS: Yes, there is a band called Randy from Sweden. They've been around for over 10 years. They're, like, old guys playing punk, but they're amazing. And then Sahara Hotnights. I saw them live a week-and-a-half ago. Their new record is going to be really good. So, those are two bands right now that people should look out for from Sweden.

SKRATCH: You had your run in hardcore/punk rock. How do you feel about the current state of the genre? It seems that a lot of new bands don't really focus on bringing positive messages out.
DENNIS: I don't know. I'm so far removed from that whole scene. I still consider myself a punk kid, but it just feels like we don't belong anywhere. I got into hardcore in early '90s, when there was a lot of positive shit happening—especially coming from Europe, where



"...NO POLITICIAN, MUSICIAN, OR TEACHER CAN ACTUALLY TEACH YOU WHAT THE WORLD IS. YOU SHOULD HAVE TO QUESTION EVERYTHING."



every hardcore and straight-edge band was political. To see that turning into a pair of baggy shorts and a distorted guitar is weird for me, but I think it says a lot about how fucked up the world is right now. You either do it our way, become really political and have to stress the fact that these are troublesome times, or it becomes totally escapist. And I think that's what happened. At the same time, it's kind of crazy to see something that when I got into was such a fringe/youth culture. I remember in 1993 they showed a 10-second clip of Sick of It All on MTV, and I was like, "Oh my God, they showed Sick of It All on MTV!" It was 10 seconds, but I was so excited! And now there's a lot of that stuff on MTV. It's weird that something that was so underground has become so big that you have punk mall shops like Hot Topic. At the same time, there's great potential, because it shows a lot of people want an alternative to a normal lifestyle, and I'm sad that a lot of the anger, energy, and frustration feels misdirected, like people are using it the wrong way. So we're just trying to be a positive band that talks about why we feel fucked up instead of just reciting, "Yeah, we're fucked up." We're trying to say, like, "Here's why we're fucked up," so I think that's a big difference.

SKRATCH: What do you do to pass time while on the road?
DENNIS: I just got myself an Ipod. It's a pretty amazing thing to have on tour. I don't ever buy CDs. I'm a vinyl kind of guy, so for tour I only brought like 25 records—and they were crappy records I wouldn't listen to when I was home, anyway. So the Ipod is good because I just downloaded everything I have on vinyl. And now we have the bus and can watch movies. That's kind of neat. It's the first time in the States that we have a bus. Then, before I go to bed, I try to read, but I've been slacking off on my reading. I need to get back on it.

SKRATCH: Any final words?
DENNIS: If you elect George Bush as president again, I will be really pissed off at you. I would say that it's really cool that this punk scene is doing the whole "punk the vote" thing and everyone's getting behind [that] and making sure that Bush is not going to be president anymore. But we also have to realize that John Kerry is not going to be any better. So my thing, like I was saying, is, "Let's get rid of Bush." That's out first goal—then let's get rid of Kerry.

The (International) Noise Conspiracy's third album, ARMED LOVE, will be hitting record stores near you on July 13th. The band will be touring throughout the end of 2004, and you can check upcoming tour dates and other information at www.international-noise.com.

Minus the Bear

Minus the Bear
Interview by Denise Blaz

Minus the Bear have a bit of a following going on for them, and even a band named Into the Moat has cited them as being an influence. They're from Seattle, and they'll be touring this summer with Braid and Murder by Death, so go see them if they stop by your city, and feel free to buy them a round of whiskey shots.

SKRATCH: Hi, may I speak to Matt, please?
JAKE: Yeah, hold on. [Time elapses] Matt is actually in the middle of a take right now. What's this regarding?

SKRATCH: I'm supposed to do an interview with him. I can actually call back later.
JAKE: Is it for the band Minus the Bear?

SKRATCH: Yeah.
JAKE: I'm in that band. Interview me. Let's do it!

SKRATCH: Okay. Your name is...?
JAKE: Jake. I play guitar.

SKRATCH: Well, you guys are in the studio right now recording an EP. Is there a name that you've assigned to it yet?
JAKE: We really don't know yet. We've been thinking about it, but nothing has really snapped yet.

SKRATCH: Is the sound different at all from your previous stuff?
JAKE: It's definitely not the same. Hopefully, it has progressed a little.

SKRATCH: Where are you from?
JAKE: Seattle.

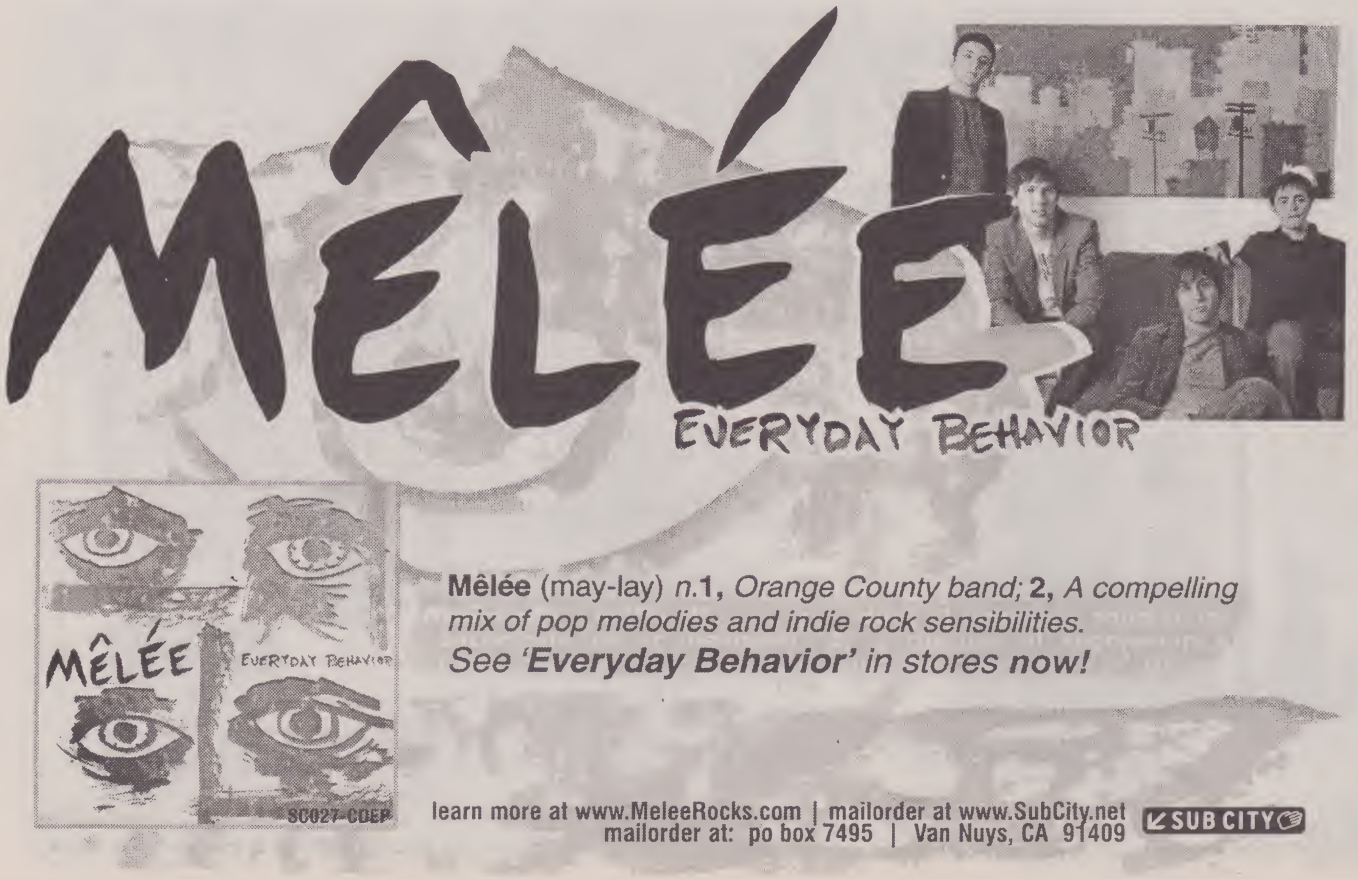
SKRATCH: Are you native to Seattle?
JAKE: I'm native to Seattle, and Dave is from Tacoma. Cory was born somewhere in Washington. [To Cory] Where were you born, Cory?
CORY: Olympia.
JAKE: Most of the guys are from other places. Cory actually considers himself from New Mexico. Erin is from Minnesota, and Matt's from Connecticut. Dave and I are the only ones from Washington, but it's a nice place to live. It's a sunny, beautiful day today.

SKRATCH: You guys are leaving for a tour of Spain in a few days. Have you ever been to Spain?
JAKE: I've never been to Spain.

SKRATCH: What are you looking forward to seeing or doing over there?
JAKE: I'm looking forward to seeing how the culture functions. Just going to shows in different countries is always different, so it's interesting to see what dynamic each place has.

SKRATCH: Who are you playing with over there?
JAKE: I fucking have no clue. Spanish bands.

SKRATCH: Nate Mendel from Foo Fighters wore one of your band shirts. That's pretty cool.
JAKE: Yeah. One day we were on tour in New Orleans and we were walking around the French Quarter, and I noticed someone I recognized, Will from The Fire Theft. They were touring, and he was in town that



same night. They ended up going to our show we played that night, and I think we gave Nate a shirt at one point in time.

SKRATCH: What would you say is the best attribute about your band?
JAKE: We just like to have a hell of a lot of fun all the time. We're fun folks to just hang out with.

SKRATCH: Where did the band name come from?
JAKE: I don't even know. They did it before I got in the band, and I just never have asked that question.

SKRATCH: So the band has had some lineup changes?
JAKE: In the initial stages of the band, it was everyone but me, pretty much. They did a little demo in their basement, and I heard it and thought I should play with them...which is kind of a bold thing to say—but I ended up getting in the band anyway.

SKRATCH: Are you happy with the stage that the band is in now?
JAKE: Everything seems to be going well, and it's exceeding my expectations, to some extent.

SKRATCH: What other stuff are you into besides music?
JAKE: I like going to the movies and reading.

SKRATCH: Do you have a favorite author?
JAKE: Probably Hemingway. But outside of the band, we generally go a bar to go and have some drinks. So if you want to add that instead of going to the movies....

SKRATCH: Do you have a drink of choice?
JAKE: I really like whiskey, and the other guys like whiskey, too. Matt is more of a vodka tonic kind of guy. But we'll drink whiskey and Budweiser.

SKRATCH: What bands have influenced your music?
JAKE: Everything: hip-hop, '70s music, rock, R&B...Even the bands that we tour with influence us.

SKRATCH: Where have you toured?
JAKE: We did a tour of the U.S., Japan, and Canada.

SKRATCH: Where the best place you've played so far?
JAKE: Japan. It was just amazing. It was totally different.

SKRATCH: How were the crowds like over there?
JAKE: They were really enthusiastic and were just fun people to in front of.

SKRATCH: What advice would you give to someone starting out?
JAKE: I say learn all the types of music you're interested in, and then try to make something original out of it. You should play in front of people a lot and tour.

SKRATCH: What was the last CD that you listened to?
JAKE: The We Ragazzi CD.

SKRATCH: First concert?
JAKE: My first concert was Joe Satriani.

SKRATCH: Did that have an impact on you?
JAKE: Yeah. He's amazing. I had never seen anyone do that kind of stuff on guitar. But I was more into metal and punk rock at that point, so it was just my first. I don't know why that was my first concert. I think it was just one that my folks let me go to.

SKRATCH: How old were you?
JAKE: I think I was 12.

SKRATCH: Do you have a favorite band?
JAKE: It changes all the time. Do you have a favorite band?

SKRATCH: Yeah, I guess.
JAKE: What is it?

SKRATCH: Foo Fighters. I really like them.
JAKE: Oh, those guys. Put Jay-Z. THE BLACK ALBUM is insanely good.

SKRATCH: Have you heard THE GREY ALBUM from Danger Mouse?
JAKE: That's amazing.

SKRATCH: Is it really?
JAKE: Yeah, it's totally good.

SKRATCH: Did you download it?
JAKE: Yeah. I recommend it.

SKRATCH: What would you like your band to be remembered for?
JAKE: Erin, you're going to answer this question.
ERIN: Anything.
JAKE: Yeah, that's a good one. We just want to be remembered for anything, really. Just [being] a band that people enjoy and got something out of.

Minus the Bear's six-song EP, THEY MAKE BEER COMMERCIALS LIKE THIS, will be released July 11th on Arena Rock Records.

We just like to have a hell of a lot of fun all the time. We're fun folks to just hang out with.

THE KINISON ★

The Kinison
By Sarah Laidlaw
Photo by George Campos

Chris (vocals), Aaron (guitar), and Bub (guitar) grew up in a small town in Illinois. They didn't have much of a music scene, but they knew that music was what they wanted to do. So, they picked up their guitars and moved to the L.A. area, hoping to make their garage-based jam bands into nationally-touring professional bands. There, they found Mike V. (bass) and Mikey (drums), who completed their band, The Kinison. Two years later, The Kinison is signed to La Salle Records (a part of Atlantic), releasing its first album (WHAT ARE YOU LISTENING TO), and touring with the likes of Poison the Well and The Bronx.

Chris tells me, "I never have anything to say, actually," but read along with our conversation, and you will see that is not true.

SKRATCH: Why did you move out of Oblong, IL?
CHRIS: It was lacking opportunities in the music world. There were no places to play and no scene there. It was hard to find members there. We decided to move to Riverside (near L.A.) to pursue our music career.

SKRATCH: Was it hard to get into the L.A. music scene?
CHRIS: I'm not sure if we're part of the scene. We were just playing shows five times a week, getting known. It wasn't hard—it just took lots of time.

SKRATCH: Do you ever see yourselves moving back to Illinois?
CHRIS: Maybe, when I'm like 50, but not any time soon.

SKRATCH: How long have Aaron, Bub, and you been friends?
CHRIS: I went to first grade with Aaron. Bub and Aaron were babysat together before they started school. So, we've known each other for a long time.

SKRATCH: How did Mike V. and Mikey meet up with you guys and become part of the band?
CHRIS: We needed a drummer and bass player, and we would just go to shows all of the time and look for new members. We pretty much stole them from the bands they were in.

SKRATCH: What inspires you to write music?
CHRIS: Depression or things not going my way. Never am I in a good mood when I write. Music is more of an outlet. I don't know—just getting drunk. [Laughs]

SKRATCH: How did you choose the title of your album, WHAT ARE YOU LISTENING TO?
CHRIS: I was in the sixth grade, and Dave Grohl came to me in a dream and told me to name my first record that. It's not a joke, but it's just kind of ironic that I kept that with me for this whole time.

SKRATCH: What is your music all about?
CHRIS: It's just a bunch of stories, true or not true, real or not real. It's really just entertainment—for the lyrics, at least. Writers write books. I don't write books, I write lyrics—and, to me, they are just little stories.

SKRATCH: How did you get signed to Atlantic's La Salle Records?
CHRIS: La Salle Records is Travis Barker's label. My good friend is a photographer, and I went with him to a photo shoot. Travis Parker showed up, and I just started talking to him. I mentioned that I was in this band, and he had heard of us. After that, he just kept coming to see us and coming to see us. He made a deal with Atlantic, and then signed us almost immediately after that.

SKRATCH: What do you credit for the success you have had so far?
CHRIS: Dedication, longevity, passion, and purity. Being out, being around, being at shows, and just playing a lot.

SKRATCH: Do you have any new material put together yet?
CHRIS: We don't have anything put together, we just have pieces that we do live. When we get bored at a show, we just start playing and jam live.

SKRATCH: What's the craziest thing to happen to you while on tour?
CHRIS: We just got back from touring with Poison the Well, and pretty much every night after the shows were just insanity. Just hanging out with those guys is pretty crazy. We hang out with Poison the Well all of the time, because they live right down the street from us.

SKRATCH: What do you hate and love about touring?
CHRIS: What I love is waking up in a different city or town, being with my good friends, being able to play a show each night, and living in a van. It's something most people don't ever get to do. We've been homeless for about a year, so the worst part of touring was coming home when we didn't have a place to stay.

SKRATCH: Where have you been staying?
CHRIS: Friends' houses and floors. Wherever, really. We just got a place yesterday. [Laughs] It sucks. Now we're leaving for tour, and we got a place. It's ironic.

SKRATCH: Was being homeless ever hard on the band?
CHRIS: Sometimes. You get stressed and you feel like a nuisance, too. Sure, it creates tension, but in every healthy relationship there should be tension.

SKRATCH: What would you be doing if you didn't have The Kinison?
CHRIS: Probably just living at my parents' house, getting fucked up. [Laughs] I mean, I probably wouldn't have a job—[or,] I know I wouldn't. I would probably just be doing nothing. This is the only thing I can do. It's the only thing for me.

SKRATCH: What are your goals for the future?
CHRIS: Just being a really good honest band that has longevity. The goal is to be a big band and successful. We just want to be able to keep writing, recording records, and playing live.

The Kinison will be touring with The Bronx, Everytime I die, and Evergreen Terrace through May and will hook up with the Warped Tour later. Check dates and other information at and www.lasallerecords.com.

WE WANTED TO BE SET APART FROM
THE TYPICAL BAND NAMES OF OUR GENRE;
WHILE PAYING TRIBUTE TO INDIVIDUAL
WHO WAS UNIQUE HIMSELF.

SILVERSTEIN

Silverstein
By Ryan
Pangilinan

Sharing their name-sake with the late author of WHERE THE SIDEWALK ENDS, Victory Record's newest sensation is a splash of color in an otherwise boring era of pop-punk-goes-screamo. Hailing from the Canadian tundra (Ontario, to be exact), Silverstein has taken elements of bands such as Grade and run with it to make their own.

Recently, drummer Paul Koehler e-mailed SKRATCH with his thoughts about being in Victory's newest "it" band.

SKRATCH: How did the band form?
PAUL: We're all from the same area (southern Ontario) and met each other through the scene.

SKRATCH: Why did you pick the name of an author?
PAUL: We wanted to be set apart from the typical band names of our genre, while paying tribute to individual who was unique himself.

SKRATCH: How has the response been to Silverstein in the United States?
PAUL: It has been overwhelmingly great. We couldn't be happier.

SKRATCH: Recently you've had a jump in sales with your album, WHEN BROKEN IS EASILY FIXED. What do you attribute that to?
PAUL: It comes with a lot of touring (on bigger tours, as well), plus the continued push from our record label with promotion, etc.

SKRATCH: What influences the Silverstein sound?
PAUL: It comes from a lot of great bands, such as Mineral, Knapsack, The Get Up Kids, and Grade.

SKRATCH: Are there any plans to record a follow-up album right now?
PAUL: Yup. We'll probably finish writing in the fall and then record in early winter.

SKRATCH: What bands are you listening to right now?
PAUL: We listen to so much, but recently: The Shins, Park, Modest Mouse, Emery, A Life Once Lost.

SKRATCH: What are your thoughts on the Warped Tour?
PAUL: It's probably the biggest tour any punk band could be a part of all year.

SKRATCH: What goals do you have for Silverstein?
PAUL: To continue creating good music, touring full-time, and working hard.

SKRATCH: Any last words?
PAUL: Check out our Website, www.silversteinmusic.com.

Silverstein will be playing the Warped Tour from July 25th to August 19th. They will be headlining their own tour from May to June with Emery, Alexisonfire, The Higher, and Hawthorne Heights. Their debut long-player, WHEN BROKEN IS EASILY FIXED, is available on Victory Records.

The Crumbs

THE CRUMBS
By Janelle Jones

The second time proved to be the charm when trying to reach Raf Classic, the affable singer/guitarist of Miami's rock 'n' roll-infused punk band The Crumbs. Rounded out by guitarist Johnny B., drummer Marcio "Grim" Gemelli, and bassist Tony Vargas, these veterans to the scene recently released LAST EXIT, an excellent 14-track tour de force on TKO a month prior to our conversation, which, along with all those rock 'n' roll/garage-type clones infiltrating the music world as of late and some side banter pertaining to the state of employment (or lack thereof), and the benefits of owning a radar detector, provided us with much to talk about.

SKRATCH: In your CD, you thank Dirt Bike Annie. I actually just saw them on Saturday.
RAF: Oh, really? Yeah, we stayed with them in their house in New York [last year]. We had some sort of fall-out there with some clubs and stuff. We left a lot of shows, we got ripped off, but they were cool enough to let us stay in their place like a whole week. Pretty cool. They went off to work, and we stayed there. [Laughter]

SKRATCH: Marcio was playing in Against All Authority for a little while?
RAF: Yes, [...] I guess he played with them almost a year. He went on a couple of tours with them, the Warped Tour and all that stuff. And then when we started playing shows again, he left AAA so we could do this full-time.

SKRATCH: What was the deciding factor to sign with TKO?
RAF: Oh, with TKO, basically, we were looking for a label that would maybe push the record a little more. I got in touch with Mark Rainy from TKO, and I sent him some of the new stuff. He liked it and he wanted to put it out, so after that it was a blessing, because we pretty much had the record done, and we didn't have a label, so we were kinda like thinking about putting it out ourselves or maybe even sending it to some local labels here; but he agreed to do it. They're doing a great job so far. We're getting good reviews, and he's putting out the record. I've seen it in a lot of places, so it's pretty cool.

SKRATCH: About your records: how do you feel the band's progressed through the years?
RAF: I think this record is very solid, as far as like...Even though we recorded all the basic tracks in four hours, we had so much time to practice, and we really had all these songs down...maybe like four months before we got a record deal. So by the time we went to the studio, it was like we did all the takes in one or two takes. Everything took about four hours to finish. And then, of course, there were a couple of overdubs here and there we did at home. But as far as the sound goes, it's very solid. And I know some of the lyrics on the record are very simplistic, and there's like one verse that repeats the second one, but I don't know; I wasn't in the mood to really write long lyrics that maybe we had prior to this one. But I feel pretty good. We recorded in four hours because we didn't have any money, so they gave us some hours free to record, and we really had no choice but to crank 'em out one after the other. Considering all that, it came out pretty tight, I think. I think TKO did a helluva job with the mastering. The record sounds very powerful in that sense. The guys from TKO, I think they went out of their way to make this record sound good, and they gave us all the support we needed at the time, because we really didn't have any money to spend on production, and they really came forward and helped us out in a way. We're happy. [Laughs] Obviously, it's great to have some money and take a week to record and really go over stuff [and] take your time; but considering the short time we had, I'm very happy about it. I would've been [happier] if we had more time, but you take it as it comes. Definitely, beggars can't be choosers. [Laughs]

SKRATCH: You guys have a real rock 'n' roll sound, too. How do you feel about the whole "rock is back"-type thing these past couple years?
RAF: I think maybe some of those starting bands started pretty genuine, and, obviously, there's always a backlash of so many people cashing in on the new sound. Like the other day I was flipping through the channels, and I was watching this video by this band Jet. I don't know if they're real or not, but all of a sudden all the bands are like that: just kind of, like, garage, and everybody's wearing denim. I remember when we first started touring many years ago, there were a few bands like that, and no one paid attention to them, you know? Starting with maybe bands like The Makers, stuff like that. When they came out, it was kind of like a throwback to some of the '60s stuff like The Seeds [...] and stuff like that. And then The Hives came out, and that was pretty cool, but I hope it doesn't turn into another grunge fiasco thing, where all these bands sound the same and they have the same formula—you know: we must record with this amp, and we must have this sound. It's okay. I mean, I'd rather listen to that than some other stuff that came out. I don't know. It's weird. At this age, I just listen to, like, all the bands, all the records I have already; I don't go out of my way to listen to anything new. A lot of new bands [...] really don't offer anything new and exciting. Maybe I'm too negative about that, but I can't think of any bands that I'd really wanna see right now. Maybe it's just that the times I went to shows were like some of the late-'80s and early-'90s stuff. Nothing was corporate, there were no bouncers, it was just more of a genuine thing. You were on your own. It was almost dangerous to go to a show. And now I feel that that whole thing is kind of lost, in a way. Like I said, there's really nothing new for me. Maybe [there is] for younger kids. In a way it's cool, because maybe with The Crumbs I am trying to do something worthwhile and fresh-sounding, you know? [...] Maybe [from] being stuck down here we're really deprived of the cool stuff that's going on around the U.S. There's a couple cool bands down here that sometimes I go out and see.

SKRATCH: I didn't know bands don't go to Miami that much.
RAF: I know. Somebody should tell everybody that this really ain't a bad place to be and that we'll give 'em some beers if they come down here! Up there in NY you get to see everybody, huh?

SKRATCH: Yeah, pretty much!
RAF: I know every time we go there, there's so many shows to see. Even the day we play, it's almost like [we] play, load up, and go see the other bands.

SKRATCH: Exactly. You can go to one show, and then go to another one right after it. That's good, but the weather stinks.
RAF: At least you get to see some seasons. Here it's always hot. You can only wear your leather jacket for a week maybe. [Laughter] This is like the worst state for wearing your leather, you know? The Ramones would really have a hard time here.

SKRATCH: [Laughs] Can you describe your sound for people who haven't heard you guys?
RAF: I would say there's a lot of raw energy with no compromises. And you either take it or just go home! [Collective laughter] [...]

SKRATCH: What do want people to get out of it? Just to have a good time?
RAF: To come out and enjoy, have a few beers, and be part of the whole Crumbs experience. If they wanna come up on stage and make a joke and make a fool of themselves, we're all up [for] it. I mean, life goes by so quick that you just gotta have fun. There's a lot of different bands, but The Crumbs...I think you just have to go to a show, kick back a couple of beers, and enjoy yourself. You'll see when you watch us next time in NYC. [...]

Visit for info. As Raf reassures, The Crumbs' activity level may have seemed suspect for a while, but they're "still alive and kicking." One thing's for sure: they're having fun with their music—and want you to as well.

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EVERGREEN TERRACE

Interview by Beth VanBoxtel

Evergreen Terrace is a five-piece band from Jacksonville, FL, that has been annihilating stages, inciting riots in crowds, and covering a multitude of songs featured on their latest release, WRITER'S BLOCK.

SKRATCH caught up with bassist Jason Southwell and guitarist Craig Chaney after a show in San Diego, CA.

SKRATCH: You've recently toured Australia. What's the music scene like over there compared to here?

CRAIG: Not as many people live there, so it's a little bit smaller.

JASON: It's the similar to here, but less trendy. They're not as exposed to the trends or genres. Like, if old-school hardcore gets popular, all of a sudden, BOOM, everybody likes it. It's really not like that over there. If it's good, they like it.

CRAIG: People there seem really sincere.

JASON: Yeah, definitely. There are a few scenesters who just want to copy everything America does, but that's expected. Australia is really awesome and diverse.

SKRATCH: You were featured on the Eulogy Recordings DVD. Is there a DVD coming out specifically of your band?

CRAIG: Yeah, there is. We recorded really good audio for it. When we did the Eulogy DVD, the audio sucks because it's just camera mics. And me and a guy met at school. He was going to film school and I was going to recording arts.

JASON: And you made love.

CRAIG: We made love, [Laughs] and we birthed our DVD. But I mixed the audio. We'll drive down to the Keys and put it all together. [The videos] are already edited.

SKRATCH: Is there a projected date to release it?

JASON: Summer sometime. We were supposed to have it turned in by the end of March. [Laughs] It'll be out by summer. It'll be really cool-

CRAIG: [Interrupting] To us. I think there's going to be six or seven live songs with montages from 40 different shows cut-in. And then there will be two- or three-minute documentaries between each one about touring.

JASON: And lots of shenanigans—setting things on fire, things like that.

SKRATCH: Anything exciting stories like that, that has happened lately?

CRAIG: We chase sheep.

JASON: Yeah. We were driving in the country, going from one show to another in Australia. And I swear to God one of these sheep called me "pussy" or something. Then we pulled over and chased him. It's all on video. It's really funny.

CRAIG: Oh, and when we were in Australia, we went to this place called Possum Creek, and we jumped off a bridge into Possum Creek, and we were swimming. And the kids there were like, "We're crazy" and "Pee on our friends." And they peed at us. So Josh climbs up underneath the bridge and just takes a poop into his hand, and BEAMS this guy Winston—who actually ended up being our roadie.

JASON: We're notorious for giving away our poop, [Laughs] sometimes in boxes.

CRAIG: Like at Gainesville Fest a year-and-a-half ago. We pooped in boxes and left them as presents for our friends. It's on our DVD, actually.

JASON: There's a lot more. Like, we flipped a Porsche.

CRAIG: Us and a few other bands that we went on tour with.

SKRATCH: On accident?

CRAIG: No, on purpose.

JASON: [Coughs] Stretch Armstrong. [Coughs] Comeback Kid.

CRAIG: It was abandoned; no one owned it. There was an engine in it. It was really hard to get one end of it over. But yeah, we flipped it over onto its roof.

[Everyone laughs]

JASON: It's a medley [featuring covers of songs by] Drowning Pool and Sponge Bob Squarepants.

SKRATCH: When you're on stage performing, what goes through your mind?

JASON: I would say: "Get this drunk piece of crap off my pedals." That was one thing on my mind tonight.

CRAIG: At least he pretended to know the words, which I think is the most amusing thing ever.

SKRATCH: Random question: How do you feel about the band Dashboard Confessional?

CRAIG: Alright. In Australia, Dashboard Confessional just played a couple nights before. I was kind of tipsy, I guess, and I said something really loud about "All you idiots or faggots that love Dashboard Confessional." I don't really have anything against them. We almost got in a little fight...but we won't talk about that. I actually like some of their stuff; I don't want to dig a hole for myself. But, you know, we were at a hardcore show, and I was just joking around. So then the next day we had an interview on the radio, and the girl called me out on the radio about saying that about Chris Carrabba.

SKRATCH: What advice would you have for bands that have to drive on icy, treacherous roads?

CRAIG: [Laughs] Don't die! We almost died on our last tour.

JASON: Seriously. We toured in the winter—which we'll never do again—and we hit black ice driving, and our van spun completely around in the middle of the road—kind of like that Bleeding Through video. And we stopped in this ditch, [an] embankment thing.

EVERGREEN TERRACE

SKRATCH: You guys do a lot of cover songs?

CRAIG: Well, we just did a cover record, all cover songs. That dropped on February 17. Check it out at your local Hot Topic. [Laughs]

JORDAN: We've done a cover song on every record, pretty much. We haven't had time to write a new record, so we talked to Eulogy (our label) to see if they'd give us so money to do a cover record, because it'd be funny. We didn't expect it to do what it is doing and the buzz that it's getting, but yeah, it's cool. We did some covers, like Offspring, U2, Tears for Fears, Hum, Sponge Bob—lots of stuff.

SKRATCH: I heard that Sponge Bob is on your secret track on that album.

CRAIG: Yeah, that's Jason and I. We did that good.

CRAIG: It was the scariest thing of my life. If it weren't for our trailer jack-knifing after we spun around 180, we would have been screwed. We were also sleeping. Yeah, bands, don't tour over the winter. But if you do, don't drive over 40.

SKRATCH: Any West Coast bands you'd like to give shout-outs to?

JASON: As I Lay Dying. Big ups.

CRAIG: We don't know anybody.

JASON: Alright: I Killed the Prom Queen from Australia.

CRAIG: Parkway Drive from Australia. And Byron Bay.

JASON: Byron Bay represent!

Evergreen Terrace tours mostly on the East Coast, but they will be venturing across Europe in June. To keep up on the crazy tour antics and schedule, visit www.ncmusic.com/bands/evergreen.

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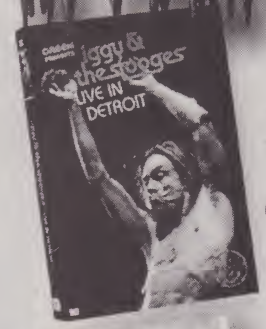

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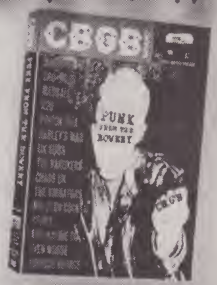

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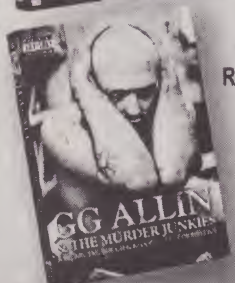

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The Sounds

You always get compared with other bands in the beginning. And Blondie is a good band, so we can live with that.

The Sounds
By Ryan Pangilinan

It's pretty easy to pawn The Sounds off as Blondie redux, being a flaxen-haired front-woman and her motley crew of rock compatriots. But don't be fooled, people: there's more rock power in The Sounds' debut album LIVING IN AMERICA than in your local rock quarry. As they gear up for being the underdog on this year's Warped Tour, bassist Johan Bengtsson and keyboard player Jesper Anderberg put their heads together to answer SKRATCH's pesky questions via e-mail.

SKRATCH: How did the band get together?
JOHAN: Me and Felix (guitar) started the band back in 1998 in a drunken state of mind. Maja, Frederic, and Jesper joined shortly after that.

SKRATCH: Do you ever tire of the Blondie comparison?
THE SOUNDS: You always get compared with other bands in the beginning. And Blondie is a good band, so we can live with that.

SKRATCH: Are there any plans to work on a follow up to LIVING IN AMERICA?
THE SOUNDS: Of course. We have a writing period planned for later this summer. But we've still got a lot of work to do with this album.

SKRATCH: What are your musical influences?
THE SOUNDS: We all have both different and similar musical influences, which is really good. We listen to everything from country to Euro-techno! That's what makes us such good songwriters.

SKRATCH: You've done a few tours of the United States now. How has the reception been?
THE SOUNDS: Awesome! It gets better and better.

SKRATCH: Are there any cities that you look forward to playing?
THE SOUNDS: Mexico City. New York City and Los Angeles are always fun.

SKRATCH: What are you listening to on the road?
THE SOUNDS: Everything from cheesy love songs to bad demo tapes.

SKRATCH: Being one of the few indie rock bands on this year's Warped Tour, what are your thoughts on the tour?
THE SOUNDS: We're really looking forward to it, but at the same time we think it's going to be really exhausting. I saw a DVD with Dropkick Murphy's from the Warped Tour, and that scared me.

SKRATCH: Are there any bands that you're looking forward to seeing on the Warped Tour?
THE SOUNDS: IMA Robot [who we toured with before], and also Bad Religion and New Found Glory. To be honest, I don't really know which bands are playing this year.

SKRATCH: What are your goals for The Sounds?
THE SOUNDS: World domination.

Catch The Sounds on the Warped Tour from June 25th to July 17th. Their debut album, LIVING IN AMERICA, is available now on New Line Records.

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AUTHORITY ZERO

By Sarah Laidlaw

The members of Authority Zero grew up in the Phoenix suburb of Mesa, AZ. Throughout their 10-year history, they've had minimal member changes (and all those that did occur happened in the first four years), devoted friends, and a fan base that grows exponentially. The band's last CD and first national release, A PASSAGE IN TIME, plucked them from hometown heroism (where shows were packed with friends and fans) and dropped them into the national music world, playing next to their idols to crowds of strangers. Now, just finishing their newest album, ANDIAMO (Italian for "we go"), the punk-rock-driven band that once rebelled against their suburban upbringing now rock against the United States government with a spot on the Rock Against Bush Tour and its politically-based songs. Although Authority Zero support opposition to Bush, they are by no means another Anti-Flag, as an equal amount of their music centers around fun and individual motivation. With an amazing array of musical influences (including metal, hardcore, hip-hop, punk, Latin, and surf), it is easy for almost anyone to identify and fall in love with Authority Zero.

SKRATCH: What inspired you to create music?
BILL: My parents had a little acoustic guitar that I played a lot. I was trying to be as good as Jimmy Page because my parents would always tell me, "You're pretty good but not as good as Jimmy Page." That got me going. And then everyone at Westwood [High School] who I chose to hang out with played guitar, so it kind of perpetuated the habit.

SKRATCH: What made you decide to have a punk-rock band (as opposed to another genre)?
BILL: [Punk] had more energy, and it just kind of meshed with our lifestyle a lot more so than anything mainstream. It was just the right type of music for us.

SKRATCH: For the past six years, you have had the same band members. To what do you attribute this solidarity?
BILL: We've always had a chemistry that seemed to stick. We've always had differences and what not, but from the reactions of different people who listen to us, we felt it was worth it to bring so many different influences together. Through the chaos, there's a cool little song that comes out of it, so the more we made like that, the more that we just wanted to stick together.

SKRATCH: How is ANDIAMO different from PASSAGE IN TIME?
BILL: ANDIAMO is different because we made it a lot rawer. There is a lot less effects on the guitars, there are only three guitar tracks (two rhythm and one lead), the vocals were done in one shot, and there's only a couple of overdubs in the choruses. We were a lot less zealous with our effects.

SKRATCH: What about the writing aspect of ANDIAMO?
BILL: We kind of had the ideas on the road. When we were in the RV, we could kind of jam together, but lately we've been in a van, so we haven't had the chance to really put it together. So, most of the stuff was written on the fly in the studio. That also made it a lot more different from PASSAGE IN TIME.

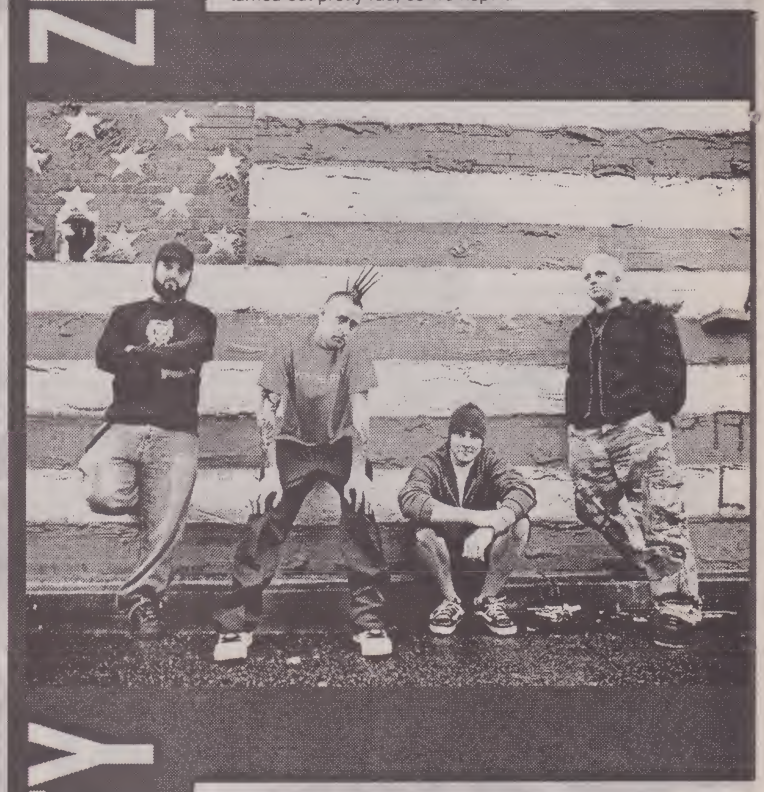
SKRATCH: I know all of the songs are new except "Solitude" and "Society's Sequence". What made you decide to include those?
BILL: "Solitude" always gets a really good reaction from crowds. We had it on local releases, but we just wanted to give it a fair shake on the national level. We redid "Society's Sequence" because it was part of our thrash-punk roots, and it was a fun song to redo. It kind of visits the teenage angst that I guess we still all have even as adults.

SKRATCH: You were on the Rock Against Bush Tour, and you have several songs on ANDIAMO that are political. Can you summarize your political position?
BILL: We lean mostly towards the left, but not necessarily all the way. We just want a candidate in office who's fair with the people and actually listens to public opinion, as opposed to doing anything that puts more money into their pockets while undermining the opinion of the public that allegedly elected him.

SKRATCH: You have lyrics in Spanish and Portuguese, "Rattlin' Bog" is an Irish song, and the title of your new album is in Italian. Why do you choose to have such diversity?
BILL: Music breaks down barriers between cultures. It's like a universal language. The more cultures we represent in our music, the more barriers we will be able to rip down. Plus, more people identify with something that sounds closer to their culture, so it gets our music out to more people while we're still bringing our culture into theirs.

SKRATCH: "Rattlin' Bog" has become a favorite at shows. I know it is an Irish folk song. Where did Jason learn it?
BILL: First, he learned it by watching this guy called Tony Cummings who plays over at the Dubliner bar. Also, we used to see him out in San Diego. He's kind of a roaming minstrel. (Is that right? I'm scared I'm going to say something bad, like "menstrual..") [Laughs] Anyway, he learned it there first, and then he learned it a little more when he had a CD of traditional Irish music. When Jason and I were over in Doolin, Ireland, he actually whispered it to a guy who knew the lyrics, because he didn't want to look like an ass in front of anybody. The guy said he was really close. So, he basically taught it to himself. I don't know if he has changed it since Doolin or not.

SKRATCH: What's the story behind covering Wall of Voodoo's "Mexican Radio"?
BILL: We were chilling with Miguel [Sublime's producer and co-producer of ANDIAMO] in Long Beach eating T-bones that he prepared (which were really good because he uses hickory chips from the little ma-and-pa store up the street). He's got vinyls from here to doomsday, and one of the records happened to be Wall of Voodoo. They were kind of a quirky band from the '80s, and they were kind of like us, [in that] they used a lot of different influences including Latin influences. Miguel thought it would be a really great idea for us to cover their hit, "Mexican Radio". We were kind of skeptical at first, but we wanted to attack the record with an open mind. Marshal [Sublime] put down some percussion [and] turntables, and it turned out pretty rad, so we kept it.



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SKRATCH: Much of your music talks about self-motivation and personal revolution. Why is this important to you?
BILL: We feel that introspection is the best way to better yourself. Change starts with the individual which is yourself.

SKRATCH: If you could decide what kids get out of your music, what would that be?
BILL: Motivation to perhaps make their life a little better or to be a little cooler to the next guy. And maybe even to be more active in voting even if it is for someone we're not cool with (like Bush), just as long as they are actually taking a role, getting out there, and voting. It would be great if they get that from our show, [as well as] to just have a new reason to live, a little spark in their life, or a little more energy.

SKRATCH: Tell me a tour story.
BILL: We were with Sum 41, No Use for a Name, and Starting Line. No Use for a Name rearranged all of the furniture in our room when we were on stage, so to retaliate we got some rope and tied all of their furniture including the 200-pound couch to the ceiling. When they came in, they said it was the gnarliest trick that anyone had ever pulled on them. We were pretty proud of that.

SKRATCH: What are your goals for the future?
BILL: I'd like to be in a tour bus, I'd like to make another album, and I'd like to tour Europe, Central and South America, and Japan.

This summer and fall, Authority Zero will be touring throughout the U.S. to promote ANDIAMO, and they will also be on some Warped Tour dates. Find out more at www.authorityzero.com.

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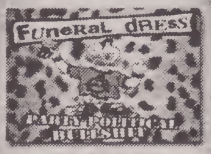

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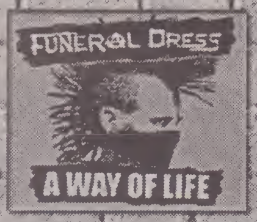

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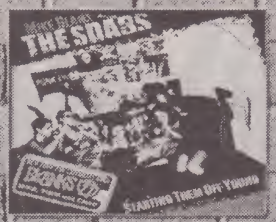

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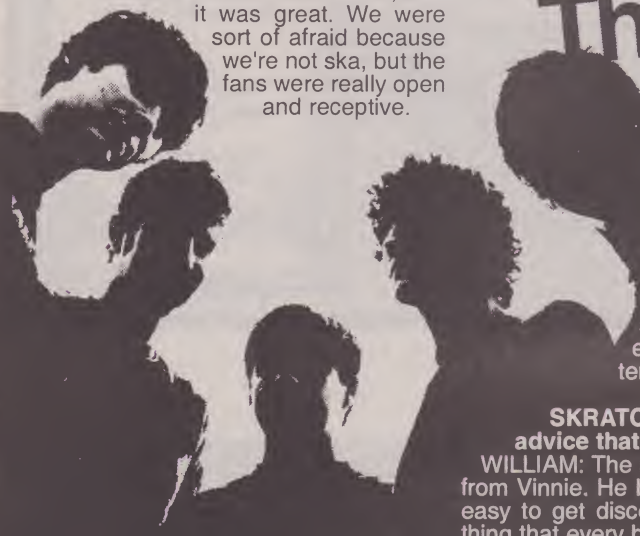
The Academy

Interview by Denise Blaz

William Beckett is the consummate ambitious frontman for The Academy. And his and the rest of the band's tunnel vision concerning the band has proven effective, as they've just wrapped up a tour with Less Than Jake, Fall Out Boy, and The Early November. Hailing from Chicago the band has grown from the sound from their EP and are planning to release an album later this year.

SKRATCH: Last night was the last date for a tour that you had with Less Than Jake. How was that like?
WILLIAM: First of all, it was a complete honor to be on tour with them. We grew up listening to them, and if you would have told me six months ago that we would be going on tour with them, I would have said your were crazy. Less Than Jake fans are awesome, and it was great. We were sort of afraid because we're not ska, but the fans were really open and receptive.



SKRATCH: How did you guys get on that tour?
WILLIAM: Well, we just signed with Fueled by Ramen—and Vinnie, the drummer for Less Than Jake, co-owns the label. He wanted to give us a test run and wanted to give us some exposure.

SKRATCH: So you guys changed record labels?
WILLIAM: Yeah, we released our EP on LLR Recordings.

SKRATCH: How was the response towards the EP?
WILLIAM: It's been pretty good, as far as fans; but as far as critics, it's been hot and cold. We're proud of it, and I think it's a real good snapshot of where we were at that time.

SKRATCH: Was the EP the first thing you ever released?
WILLIAM: Personally, no: I had a solo project.

SKRATCH: What drew you to music?
WILLIAM: It's just something I've always been fascinated with. I liked the interaction that the bands I love have, as far as live performance. Playing acoustic on a stool gets sort of redundant, and it really wasn't doing it for me. I just

SKRATCH: So you got into music basically just to rock out?
WILLIAM: Yeah, I guess so.

SKRATCH: I'm going to go back to the Less Than Jake tour. What was the best show of the tour?
WILLIAM: The one that really stood out was the second show of the tour. The first show was in Orlando at this big festival, and there was free beer and shit. All these college kids were there, and they were totally not there for the music. But the next night was in South Carolina at the House of Blues, and that was just like a real show. There was an energetic reaction, and we really felt it.

SKRATCH: Did you get to hang out with them?

WILLIAM: Oh yeah. We didn't want to go balls-out and party with them, because Vinnie is our boss, but we hung out with them a lot and we learned a lot from them. We were star-struck, to be honest, but it was cool to listen to their stories.

SKRATCH: What was the best advice that they gave you?
WILLIAM: The best advice I heard was from Vinnie. He basically told us that it's easy to get discouraged, but it's something that every band goes through.

SKRATCH: What do you think your band has to offer people?
WILLIAM: The biggest asset about our band is that we're blatantly honest, especially with our new songs. They just radiate complete and utter honesty. I think so many bands are so bland, as far as lyrical content, and I think it's about time that one comes out and is able to say it how it is.

SKRATCH: Have you written a lot of stuff for this upcoming album?
WILLIAM: Yeah, Mike and me have locked ourselves in our apartment. We don't have any more friends because we just sit around and write. Thus far we have about 17 songs that we've written.

SKRATCH: How do they sound like?
WILLIAM: They're not going to be these guitar-ripping solos or have insane vocal scales. We're not that band, because we're not there as musicians yet. Honestly, those songs and bands don't touch me. I believe there's a level of modesty in our music, where we don't try to outdo ourselves.

SKRATCH: What are your other interests besides the band?
WILLIAM: I really like to read and I like film, but that's basically it. I've pretty

else is sort of subsidiary. I have this insanely-driven ambition.

SKRATCH: Have you always been that way?
WILLIAM: Yeah. In high school I used to be in sports, and I was passionate about baseball; and the same goes for my academics. It's a flaw of mine. I focus on one thing, and everything else takes a back seat.

SKRATCH: Would you like to go to college one day?

WILLIAM: Right now I'm just taking my life as it goes. I'm really young, so there's always time for school. I've had so many conversations with college kids on tour to get their perspective on their lives, and most of them aren't happy.

SKRATCH: Do you want fame?
WILLIAM: Absolutely. As far as we are concerned, we're not like every garage band that is blasting that whole indie-rock mentality. And when it comes down to it, it's all about our music and how many people we can reach out to.

SKRATCH: Can you go ahead and tell me about the other guys in the band?
WILLIAM: Well, what do you want to know?

SKRATCH: Anything.
WILLIAM: There's Mike Carden, who's a guitarist and writes the majority of songs. He's really one of the most ambitious people I've ever met. I've never met someone who shares my ambition quite like he does. Then there's AJ, who's like our drummer, Mike (we call him Little Mike). They're probably two of the most gifted musicians I've ever heard for their age. Our drummer has been playing drums since he was five, and his dad was in this '70s band named Europe. He's an amazing guitarist, and I guess the apple doesn't fall far from the tree, because Mike's the same way. It's great to be playing with musicians who possess this raw, untamed talent. And then there's the youngest, Adam. He has a memorable look to him, because has a little fro going, and he's the most outgoing guy I've ever met. He's the one that people really latch on to, and everyone loves him. I think there's a lot of personality in our band, and we're all a lot different from one another, so I think that brings a broader range of kids that can connect to us.

For more about The Academy, visit their Website at www.theacademyrock.com.

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MADCAP

MADCAP
Interview and photo by Annette Ovanessian

I've noticed a significant amount of change among the members of Madcap since their recent switch from Side One Dummy Records to Victory Records. Aside from the fact that a new guitarist has made it a hell of a lot better to work with, they seem more satisfied and more confident about making music on their new record label. Embarking on a national tour scheduled sporadically this summer, Madcap works hard to gain everybody's attention when it comes to playing shows. Exploding with punk-rock energy, dripping with passionate sweat, and moving with soul, Madcap is a real live act!

Their new album, UNDER SUSPICION, grabs your full attention and makes your mouth move along with all the words. A well-structured album with both catchy lyrics and catchy hooks makes its mark as a success. Besides only getting an 11-song album, the CD also has a built in DVD with tons of extras! There is a bonus track, a photo gallery, and a short documentary of Madcap in the studio. The cameras were at their studio, and the guys took time to show us around. We get to see what instruments were used during the recording and why they decided to record this album way out in Calabasas, CA. According to Johnny (vocals), they wanted to record this record in relaxation, "away from the hustle of the city."

Raging with excitement, Madcap couldn't wait to share their love out about this album. I sat in their packed tour van and made them answer some new questions about the NEW Madcap!

SKRATCH: I couldn't help but notice that your previous guitarist, Alfredo, was replaced. What happened?
JOHNNY: Alfredo is gone. When it's time to move on from something, you know it, you feel it. It was also so many other things...The list goes on and on.
JAKE: What I want personally out of a band is to be able to be friends with everyone in the band—and NOW I'm friends with everyone in the band!

SKRATCH: What was the process of looking for a new guitarist like?
JOHNNY: Ace was in a band called PBR. They were based out of San Diego, and we put on a show with him, and for some reason it was in the cards. It was probably meant to be. He was the first guy we thought of, and he was the last guy we tried out.
ACE: [Whispers] Meant to be.

SKRATCH: So, how do you like being in Madcap now?
ACE: It's awesome. They're great guys, good music...I'm having a good time.

SKRATCH: Have you been able to put your own flavor to the Madcap sound?
MIKE: I think so.
JAKE: I would say yes.
JOHNNY: Definitely.

SKRATCH: Tell me about the switch over to Victory Records, how it happened and how it's been so far. How did they "understand you vision?"
JOHNNY: It was kind of like the same deal like it was with Alfredo: it was just time for a change. And luckily for us, it ended up being Victory. They totally share a vision. We just believe in doing everything out of the heart and not being fake, being totally real. They're hard workers, and they just love what their doing.
JAKE: They work as hard as we're going to work, and I like that.

SKRATCH: And Ace just fell right in to in the hands of Victory!
JOHNNY: Victory landed in his lap!
ACE: Yeah, I got a present!

SKRATCH: You ended up sticking with the same producer, Captain Hutt. Why?
ACE: He's the man.
JOHNNY: When you're doing an album, you want somebody A) you can get along with, and B) who knows what you're trying to achieve.
JAKE: We're both on the same page.
JOHNNY: He's a friend of ours, and it's just better with someone you know and respect, and someone that respects you. The product comes out better that way.

SKRATCH: I know Madcap has been touring so much during the summer and through the winter. How have you guys had time to work on this new record?
JOHNNY: Actually, we've been touring a lot, but we came home.
JAKE: We actually had about three months off to write the new record, which is something we've never done before. For every other record, it's been done in two weeks and then we'd record it, but this time we actually put everything we had into it.
JOHNNY: The best time for me to write is late at night when I can't sleep. I am an insomniac. I always have my guitar with me. The guitar went wherever I went. It's funny, because we have two cell phones. We have a band cell phone and a personal cell phone.
JAKE: Anytime that there's an idea, you call up your cell phone, singing into the cell and recording all the song ideas on the

voicemail, and then we'd go to practice, and we'd listen to all the voicemails and kind of group together the ideas, and the songs began to come together.
JOHNNY: It's not the best way of doing it, I'll tell you that!

SKRATCH: You said that your new album, UNDER SUSPICION, is about the "unfaithful." What are some unfaithful things that have happened to you that have sparked such songs?
JOHNNY: [Laughs] Unfaithful doesn't necessarily mean cheating. When you really believe in something and you put your whole heart into it and people out there you know are ruthless, sometimes you get all that stuff kicked back in your face. It's about being unfaithful in so many different ways. I mean, you might be at work. You'll be doing your job, and your boss will come up and be a totally dick to you. There are songs on the album, like "Turnaround", that just deal with vindictive people. All that comes down to faith for me, because faith is all I think any of us in the band have and believe in, because we wouldn't be here if we didn't have faith in it.

SKRATCH: What are you feelings about this new record?
JOHNNY: I think we're all the most excited we've ever been about a release.
JAKE: In all honesty, I'm happy with everything that we've done with this record. I can look back, regardless of anything that happens with the band from here on out, and just be happy with the record that we made; and that's something that I've really never been able to do before.
JOHNNY: I think this album is Madcap, and the other ones I don't think were Madcap. I think this is what we all want to be. I think I would love to call this our first album.
JAKE: I mean, this really is the first one where everyone is on the same page and everyone gets along and agrees.

SKRATCH: You have called this album "the best art this band ever made." What is so different from this album to the rest?
JOHNNY: We did whatever we felt was right, and a lot of the other releases weren't so much like that. There was so much inner turmoil in the band, and it was causing us not to be focused. There's a lot of reggae stuff, and there's a lot of rock stuff. I mean, it all comes from the heart.

SKRATCH: I didn't know you guys were into reggae at all.
JOHNNY: Jake started listening to reggae this year.
JAKE: I listen to a lot of reggae [and] took in a lot of influence, just a lot of dub drumming and what not.

SKRATCH: You used a vintage Fairchild compressor for your vocals on all the tracks. What is a vintage Fairchild compressor?
JOHNNY: I don't know the whole gist of it, but a compressor in general makes everything even, so no instrument or no certain thing is louder that anything else. It just makes it sound nice. Some tetchy guy is going to be like, "You fucking idiot," but it's something like that. I don't know. All I do know is that the Fairchild we used was last used by Johnny Cash on the album he did right before he passed. It was obviously just so old—vintage, compared to all the other likes in the room.

SKRATCH: Tell me the message behind the song "Youth Explosion"?
JOHNNY: "Youth Explosion", I guess, stems from anger. I mean, youth, to me, isn't being young or being old, it's an ideal; and at the time when my parents were selling their house, the realtor would always come to the house and always have these nice suits on and stuff, and one day he asked me, "So, what do you do?" And I was like, "I play music." And he said that, "You might get farther if you kind of shaped up and get your clothes cleaned." And I got so pissed off, and I was like, "You don't really know what it's all about." So I just went and wrote this song about showing that youth doesn't matter how old you are: it's always there.

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IN PASSING

IN PASSING
By Janelle Jones

It was a little odd interviewing vocalist/guitarist/primary songwriter Wes, since I hadn't even heard In Passing's debut full-length LOOK ALIVE (which was set for release April 20th on Indianola). As luck would have it, an unmastered version came in the mail the day after our little chat. Cruel world! No matter. Doing this interview, I learned much about this up-and-coming four-piece—and if you read on, so will you.

SKRATCH: You guys moved from Tampa.
WES: Yes, we're originally from Tampa, and I'm a little bit older than some of the other guys, so I kinda bounced around across Florida and found my way to Orlando. Then last August the three of them came over to Orlando. Things were going good, and we decided to do the band full force, and with that we tried to figure out rent. Basically, there was no way we could pay for everything and be on the road, so we [weighed] all our options, and [guitarist] Brooks made a call to his grandparents in Pennsylvania. They have a large house, and they don't touch half of it, so they were like, "Hey, you guys can come live here." So, in essence, we kind of live there. We don't really call it our home or anything like that. That's where our stuff is. But it's, what, April? And we've been there the first two weeks of January. And that's it. [Laughs]

SKRATCH: What?
WES: Just 'cause we're gone all the time, it's more a place just to store our crap.

SKRATCH: What was the deciding factor in signing with Indianola?
WES: Um...they're putting out the CD! [Laughs]

SKRATCH: Yeah, but...!
WES: That's about it. We actually signed with a label out of Tennessee called Eleven Eleven, and that whole situation just got all screwed up. Basically, the label was filing for bankruptcy, that type of thing. So we got released from there, and like the next week we got a call from Indianola, like "Hey, what's going on?" So we met with them and talked to them about it, and it was not a big deal at all. They were gonna put out the record and that was it.

SKRATCH: That's pretty cool.
WES: Yeah, we were extremely fortunate right there. [Laughs] Having Eleven Eleven fall through just completely knocked us on our ass. We had no idea what to do. We had made all these plans for moving and touring and everything and getting the record out, and then when Eleven Eleven fell through, we were like, "Oh, man, now we're not gonna have a record." And then we got on the phone with Indianola, and all that changed—so we were very lucky there.

SKRATCH: Sometimes that seems to happen. Some labels are kinda shaky. Sometimes people can't even get rights to their own records.
WES: Yeah. We were kinda nervous going into this, 'cause Eleven Eleven was a small label—very small—but, again, we didn't care: we were just trying to get the record out. And then when we met up with Indianola, we'd known some other bands who'd done business with them, so we knew we weren't gonna get ripped off or anything like that. We knew it was gonna be an actual label.

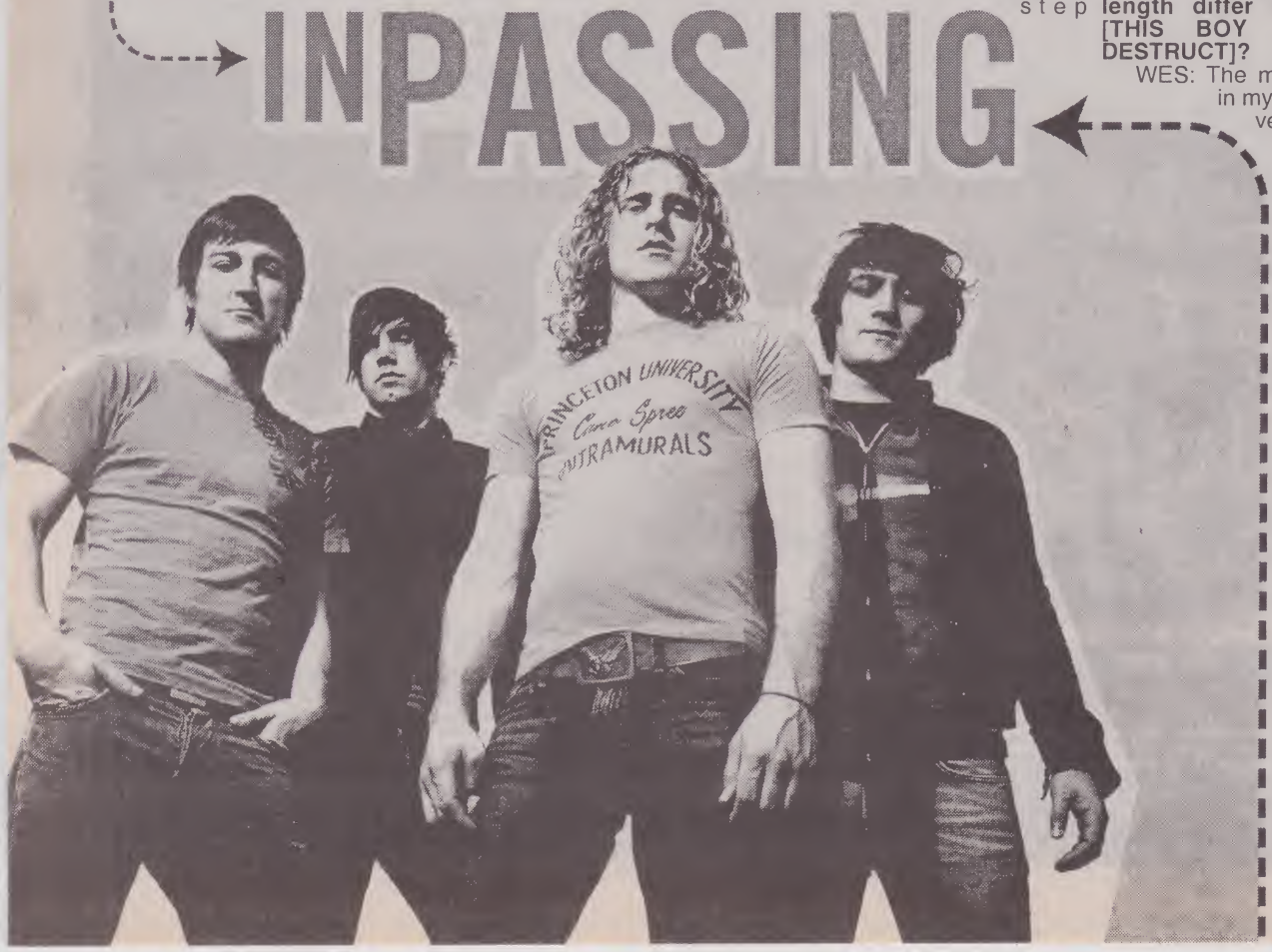
SKRATCH: You just finished up a tour yesterday?
WES: Yeah, basically. [...]

SKRATCH: Where'd you hit?
WES: [...] East Coast. [...] We were out to Cincinnati, but right now we're just trying to stick to East Coast to make sure. Like, we don't have the new record out yet, so we're just kinda holding off on the West [Coast] still. Not to mention it's a big step going over there, and we're not in a financial position to risk it. But we leave again May 1st, heading out with [...] Audible Campaign, and that's hitting all over the place for a month. And then we got a week off, and then I think we're talking about going out West. I'm not sure. Our drummer's doing all our booking right now. It's kind of a day-to-day thing as far as what's gonna happen.

SKRATCH: Give us an incentive to see you live.
WES: Live is the whole reason we're a band. Being in a studio's great, it's tremendous fun. For me, I love writing songs. But playing them is even better. And I've been on this kick lately, where anybody out there can just go crazy, and there's probably a good majority of kids out there who just go "wow" and like the band. And lately we all have been kind of forcing ourselves: "Hey, why don't you actually play your instrument right?"—as kind of a personal thing to play our instruments better. We have fun and put some energy into it. Troy's been known to light his drum set on fire.

SKRATCH: Really?
WES: Yeah, on occasion. [I'm] trying to figure out a way how I can light my guitar on fire, but I haven't figured it out yet. [Laughter]

SKRATCH: How does the full-length differ from the EP [THIS BOY WILL SELF DESTRUCT]?
WES: The main difference, in my mind...like, I'm very happy with the EP and I like it a lot, but as far as...For me, the songs [on the full-length] are a lot faster. I felt like the EP was a little too slow, so I [made] a conscious effort to [...] have a little more fun with [writing these songs] and to have a little more power behind the music. And lyrically, I feel I've progressed quite a bit, and just songwriting-wise. Brooks can do solos that I can't



even think up! [Laughs] But when it comes to writing a song, sometimes it's there, sometimes it's not. Like my thing is, I'm not that good at guitar, but I totally focus all my energy on actually writing the song before anything else.

SKRATCH: On LOOK ALIVE, what are some themes you cover?
WES: A lot of it has to do with kinda doing the right thing. Being from Tampa, my personal view on the scene down there [is that] it can be a little fake [...] So it's just kinda do the right thing, quit being weak in certain areas. I think a lot of people are just too obsessed with the way things are going and not with the way things actually are...if that makes any sense at all! [Laughs]

SKRATCH: Within the scene?
WES: Just people in general, 'cause a lot of the friends I know...It's just that everybody's so concerned about little things that they don't actually see what's going on.

"...I THINK A LOT OF PEOPLE ARE JUST TOO OBSESSED WITH THE WAY THINGS ARE GOING AND NOT WITH THE WAY THINGS ACTUALLY ARE...IF THAT MAKES ANY SENSE AT ALL"

And I'm just trying to have a lot more fun.

SKRATCH: All right. The song I heard, "717"...I don't really know your "sound," but what I got from that basically was energetic, upbeat indie rock.
WES: Totally. I would say that [one] is the most pop-punk song we have, that is easily, from my point of view, the poppiest song. It's pretty much indie rock. I try to ask friends, other bands, people I trust: "So when people ask me, who do I tell them we sound like?"—and I'm yet to get anything real. The only thing I can say is our influences are early Jimmy Eat World and Sunny Day Real Estate, The Weakerthans, stuff like that. So it's poppy indie rock, but we try to add our own little twist to it. As of late, I've had a very cynical kinda look on music, and all these bands coming out...I'm sure they're good, but [...] it all starts to sound the same, so I just try to do something a little different.

SKRATCH: Yeah, some bands seem like they're doing it just to make a quick buck and their hearts aren't really into it—but you can't really say for sure. It's tough.
WES: Yeah. [...] Other Florida bands we're friends with and just bands we meet out and about (to where one point in time you've probably known them for a while), you know how they feel about certain things, and you know that maybe when they're writing new music they're putting a little bit more thought into the business side of it than actually the music side of it—which, depending on where you are, if that's what you wanna do, do it. It's just maybe not the best idea, [but] maybe it is for them.

SKRATCH: Have anything special planned the day the record comes out?
WES: That day we're probably just gonna have a big dinner. Since we have these next two weeks off, May 22nd is our CD release in Tampa, and that day things are probably just gonna get crazy. [Laughs] Obviously we have a lot of friends in Tampa. We'll probably just get stupid partying.

In Passing will be out on tour through the summer with Audible Campaign, Monday in London, and Desert City Soundtrack. Check www.indianolarecords.com.

New Black

NEWBLACK
By Chip Midnight

True to the new-wave definition, New Black's music is ripe with frantic keyboards played robotickly by Rachel Shindelman, but the Chicago band's music is also rich with acerbic punk-rock guitar riffs courtesy of Patti Gran and co-lead vocals by Gran and bassist Liam Kimball. Drummer Nick Kraska rounds out the relatively new band, whose self-titled debut (out on Thick Records) is fresh from the oven. The band quickly recorded the album during October and November 2003 in five days ("If you have your shit together that's all you need," says Kraska), in part at Steve Albini's Electrical Audio studio and in part of Greg Norman's Studio Greg Studios II. Following an early March CD-release party in Chicago at the Fireside Bowl, New Black intends on taking their show to Europe. "Total. World. Domination," Kraska says.

New Black took some time to answer some questions (via e-mail) following a band practice.

SKRATCH: Do you consciously try to stay away from being too retro-trendy?

PATTI: I don't consciously try to stay away from being trendy or not trendy. I am really influenced by '80s music, but since I'm not an '80s child, I don't need to immerse myself in '80s-ness.

RACHEL: I don't know if we can. All of us have been influenced by the '80s. And I play the ultimate '80s keyboard, a Yamaha DX7. But I got it before '80s came back in style. I don't know what I'm going to do when they go out. My fanfisa is broken.

NICK: We just try to have taste about it. A little salt brings out the flavor, [while] too much salt tastes like McDonald's. While we grew up in the '80s, we also have been alive listening to music and being influenced since then so there's obviously some '80s influence, but just as much early '90s and so on. It'd be pretty short sighted for us to base our entire sound on such a narrow time-frame in musical history.

LIAM: I think that it's better to be influenced by your influences rather than imitate them. It's unfortunate that keyboards are so under-utilized in rock and punk.

SKRATCH: Have the guys in New Black ever worn skinny ties?

PATTI: Fuck no. I'd kick their ass.

RACHEL: An appearance of '80s ties would probably cause New Black's break-up.

NICK: No. However, I'll admit to wearing red parachute pants at my fourth-grade birthday party at Showbiz Pizza. It was at this birthday party that I lost my red Velcro wallet containing a fresh new $5 bill in the ball hopper bin. They said maybe the cleaning crew would find my wallet at the end of the day. They never did.

LIAM: Never. Fat ties all the time. It's time that the big tie got its turn in rock 'n' roll.

SKRATCH: What is the best show you've played?

NICK: I think the most fun was at the first round of Battle of the Bands. We really got to play up the crowd and the whole night. It was like being in high school. We sent the other bands who played that night notes informing them that they were about to get their ass kicked. It was all very tongue in cheek, but a blast in the way that doing karaoke is a blast.

SKRATCH: Do you see a lot of people doing the "robot" dance during your set?

PATTI: I wish I saw more people doing the robot dance to our music.

RACHEL: And we have a song called "RobotdooR"! It'd be perfect for the robot dance! I think I saw our first robot dancer on Saturday night, actually. Turns out he was really drunk, though. Afterward, he introduced himself to me as "Smelly!"

NICK: Not personally, because with the way we're set up on stage, I just stare at Rachel's butt the entire time.

RACHEL: "Hey!"

SKRATCH: The back-and-forth chemistry between Patti and Liam really adds another dimension to the music.

NICK: That was always the intent. Patti sang leads in past bands, as did Liam. Growing up listening to, say, Sonic Youth, you always had these talks with your friends about whose songs you liked best, Kim's, Lee's, or Thurston's. The distinctive personalities were just another interesting layer to the band that I always liked.

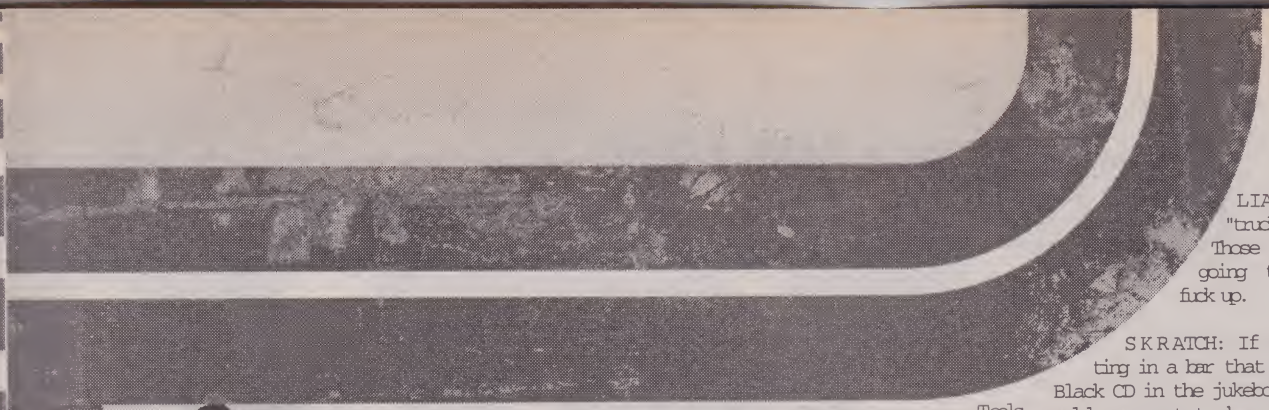
LIAM: There are songs that I like to play, and songs that I like to sing. It works out real well that Patti can write words to the latter [...]. It's really obvious when we start writing a song who is going to be singing it. I don't think any of us went into this band wanting to be the one in the front.

SKRATCH: Rachel and Nick are dating, Patti and Liam are not. When there are disagreements within the band, do Rachel and Nick always team up?

PATTI: Actually, I'd say the opposite: when there are disagreements in the band, it's usually between Nick and Rachel. That's always interesting, but ultimately I forget that they are a couple. They separate the two pretty well, except when they make out in band practice.

RACHEL: But we have instituted a "no sex in the band van" (which, incidentally, is named Vanual "Vannie" Noriega) rule! But yeah, I would say most disagreements in the band are between Nick and me. We have had some interesting discussions post-practice. But if he gives me too hard a time, I just pretend we're bandmates, not lovers, if you get my meaning. Ha ha ha ha.

NICK: Rachel and I always win. Actually, I think Rachel has it a little harder than she probably should,



because I am harder on her than [I would be on] just a normal bandmate and perhaps over-compensate [to make sure] that I'm not treating her special just because she's my girlfriend. That said, in a fight, I'd pick Liam for my team: he's got the mass. The girls can fend for themselves. Chivalry is dead.
PATTI AND RACHEL: We would just start crying. Nobody likes to make girls cry.

SKRATCH: There is a very live feel to the sound of the CD.
NICK: The basic tracks were all done live. There were a few places where we went back and did some surgery to fix things here and there, but the majority of the record was done live. I think records that are live-sounding or that sound like a real band playing in a room sound better. The less studio trickery going on, the better. In the era of Pro Tools and such, everyone can make a "perfect" record these days, so having the restraint not to and to leave a few mistakes makes you stand out more. To make a silly comparison, the reason people liked Cindy Crawford was because of her mole.

SKRATCH: When you're not playing the part of new-wave rock star, what is your day job?
RACHEL: Honest to God, I proofread coupons and the back of food packages.
NICK: "The part of new-wave rock star?" I don't think I understand your question. Actually, I work as a Web designer and also do some studio work in town.
LIAM: I can't believe you saw that episode of SAVED BY THE BELL. No one has ever recognized me as "New Wave Rock Star #2"!

SKRATCH: Fill in the blank: _____ are the new black.
NICK: Stuffed animals.
LIAM: Mesh "trucker" hats. Those things are going to blow the fuck up.

SKRATCH: If you were sitting in a bar that had the New Black CD in the jukebox, what song would you want to hear played right before one of yours? right after yours? What New Black song would be played between the two?
PATTI: "Mesopotamia", (B-52's) "RobotoboR", "Back to Dungaree High" (Turbonegro). That'd be a big sandwich of love for me.
RACHEL: "Happiness Is a Warm Gun", "RobotoboR", "That'll Be the Day" (Buddy Holly). I realize that doesn't match, but I like both those songs. A lot.
NICK: The bar is dimly lit, smoky and inhabited by the bartender, a man in a long, tan trench coat at the end of the bar, and a woman with dark hair and bright red lipstick smoking one of those cigarettes that's like one foot long. She's drinking a Manhattan straight-up and then plays "Ramblin' Man" by Hank Williams, followed by "Twisted Lips", then "The Kill", and finishes it off with "Here Comes the Sun" by The Beatles.

Surf to www.newblack.net for up-to-date news, tour information, and MP3s.

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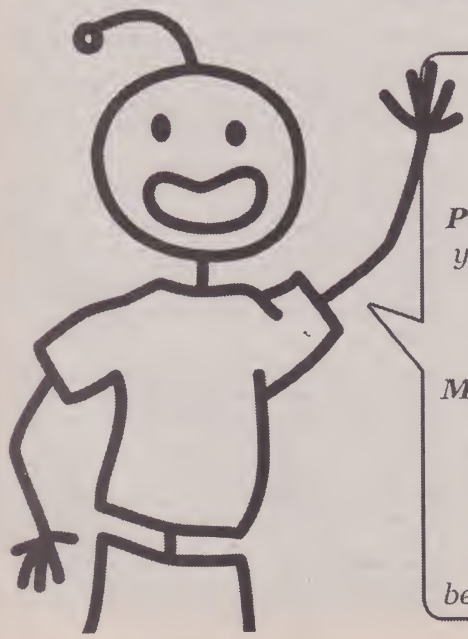

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"IF THIS IS WHAT I THINK ABOUT MYSELF, IMAGINE WHAT I THINK ABOUT YOU."

THE MARVELS
By Sarah Laidlaw

Emanating from the small town of Portland, ME, and migrating to Boston, The Marvels are a true punk-rock band. Their music is raw and fast with self-deprecating vocals that will lift you out of a bad mood, rather than put you in one. The five-piece range in age from mid 20s to late 40s, but all have a love for rock 'n' roll and punk rebellion-and act on it. Their shows usually take place in smoky dive bars and involve a lot of drinking and beer-spitting by the crowd and the band.

Staffy (vocals) talked with me about The Marvels and their inspirations and drinking habits.

SKRATCH: What inspired you to play the music you do and to have a band in the first place?
STAFFY: I was 15 or so when I started getting into punk rock like Minor Threat, Dead Boys, and all that kind of thing, and a friend of mine gave me a bass guitar. It kind of went from there. I went through a bunch of bad high-school bands-like a lot of people do-and then eventually I got this band started, and its been going since then.

SKRATCH: What non-musical influences do you have in writing music?
STAFFY: Everyday kind of stuff that almost everybody can associate with in some kind of way.

SKRATCH: How did you all end up together?
STAFFY: When we first moved to Boston, we had the other guys still playing with us, but they kind of went off and did other things. Jesse and Michelle had been friends and fans of the band and were in bands themselves. When the spots opened up in the line-up, we asked them if they were interested, and they jumped onboard. With Jimmy B., it was the same thing: we knew of him and gave him a call, and it kind of all worked out.

SKRATCH: What caused the move from Portland to Boston?
STAFFY: We had been playing in Portland for about a year-and-a-half. Portland is a pretty small town. You pretty much know everybody, and it came to the point that we couldn't do anything more without moving to a bigger city. We had to decide between living in Portland and playing once a month or [moving and] trying to take it a little bit further.

SKRATCH: Which hometown do you and Zim prefer?
STAFFY: I couldn't really pick a favorite. They are both great in their own way. Portland will always be my old hometown, but Boston is our home now. I think both are cool. Portland is a little bit more crazy. Drinks are a little bit cheaper up in Portland.

SKRATCH: Where do you prefer to play?
STAFFY: We always play at a place called Geno's when we are up in Portland. It's a great dive bar. The bartenders are usually drunker than the patrons. There are a few great clubs around here, but I would have to say the Abbey Lounge is a similar kind of thing to Geno's. It's a dive bar and holds a couple hundred people. It's really a good time.

SKRATCH: How often do The Marvels get back to Portland?
STAFFY: It's only a two-hour drive from Boston, so we try to get back there once every couple of months.

SKRATCH: I heard the stories of the beer-spitting shows. Tell me about the rest of the experience I could expect to have at one of your shows.
STAFFY: A lot of drunken rock 'n' roll chaos-us included. It's a lot of booze and a good time. That doesn't include violent type of things or anything like that, but anything other than that pretty much goes. Portland has been known to have a lot of broken glass involved, but luckily nobody's been hurt (knock on wood).

SKRATCH: How do you prepare for a show?
STAFFY: We definitely need some "talent juice" before we get up on stage. That's what we like to call a little bit of the booze: "talent juice." No group huddles or anything like that. We usually get a few beers, get up there, and do our damnedest.

SKRATCH: What do you think about on stage?
STAFFY: Most of the time I just think about having a great time. I don't really think about much, other than that I love playing the music-and I'm just thankful to be up there having other people enjoy it, as well.

SKRATCH: I read that Zim writes all of your songs. How does that work?
STAFFY: What usually ends up happening is that Zim will come into practice with three or four different parts to a song. Then, we will work together to kind of flesh out the arrangement, make changes here and there, move things around, and change up some of the chords a little bit. It's pretty much the same with the lyrics: he'll frequently come in with some kind of vague idea, and I'll frequently tell him it sucks and it has to be changed. [Laughs]

SKRATCH: A lot of your music's lyrics are self-criticizing and a little hopeless. You describe it as "self-deprecating." Are these things you feel about yourselves, or is there another reason for the lyrics being what they are?
STAFFY: I think a lot about how we tend to think about ourselves. As one person says, "If this is what I think about myself, imagine what I think about you." I think I'm a little bit judgmental of myself, but I think everybody has their not-so-happy times. The music is not really supposed to be depressing; it's just an outlook that I think everyone can associate with once in a while.

SKRATCH: What do you want people to get out of your music?
STAFFY: Mostly just a good time. I think that people can enjoy listening to it. It's good drinking music, good shittin'-around music, or whatever you would like to do with it. That's about all I can really hope for.

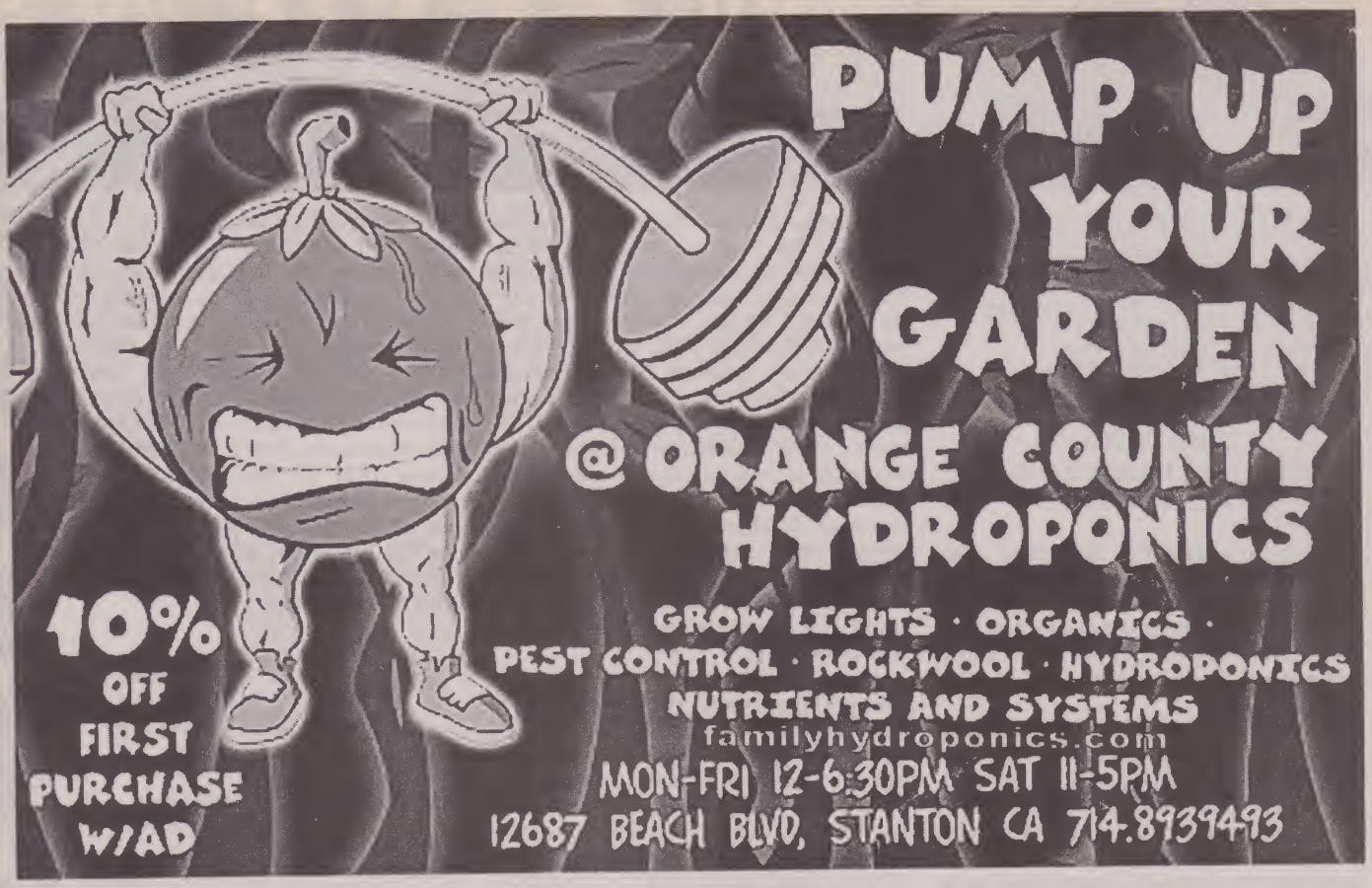
SKRATCH: What do you do when you're not playing and practicing?
STAFFY: We all have jobs, unfortunately. We would love to not be working and just playing 28 days out of the month. In our off time, we try to catch our friends' bands in town as much as possible. Drinking is also a big hobby. Other than that, a couple of us really like video games.

SKRATCH: What video games are you playing right now?
STAFFY: I'm a big baseball fan and a big Red Sox fan, so I like the video game baseball. I think Zim likes anything where he can shoot people.

SKRATCH: Do you enjoy touring?
STAFFY: It's always awesome playing for a hometown crowd, because you know everybody and it's much more of a party. But at the same time, getting out there and touring is what it's all about. I love being in the van, and I think it makes you a lot tighter of a band, because you don't have any of the other distractions you have at home; all you have is the band.

SKRATCH: What are your goals for The Marvels?
STAFFY: Play as much as possible, have some good times, meet some people on the way, and stay alive.

The Marvels just released their latest CD, CHEAT TO WIN, and plan on touring throughout this summer and fall. Find out more at www.themarvels.net and www.abbeylounge.com. Staffy also wants to encourage people to check out Boston's rock/punk scene, promising that it is great.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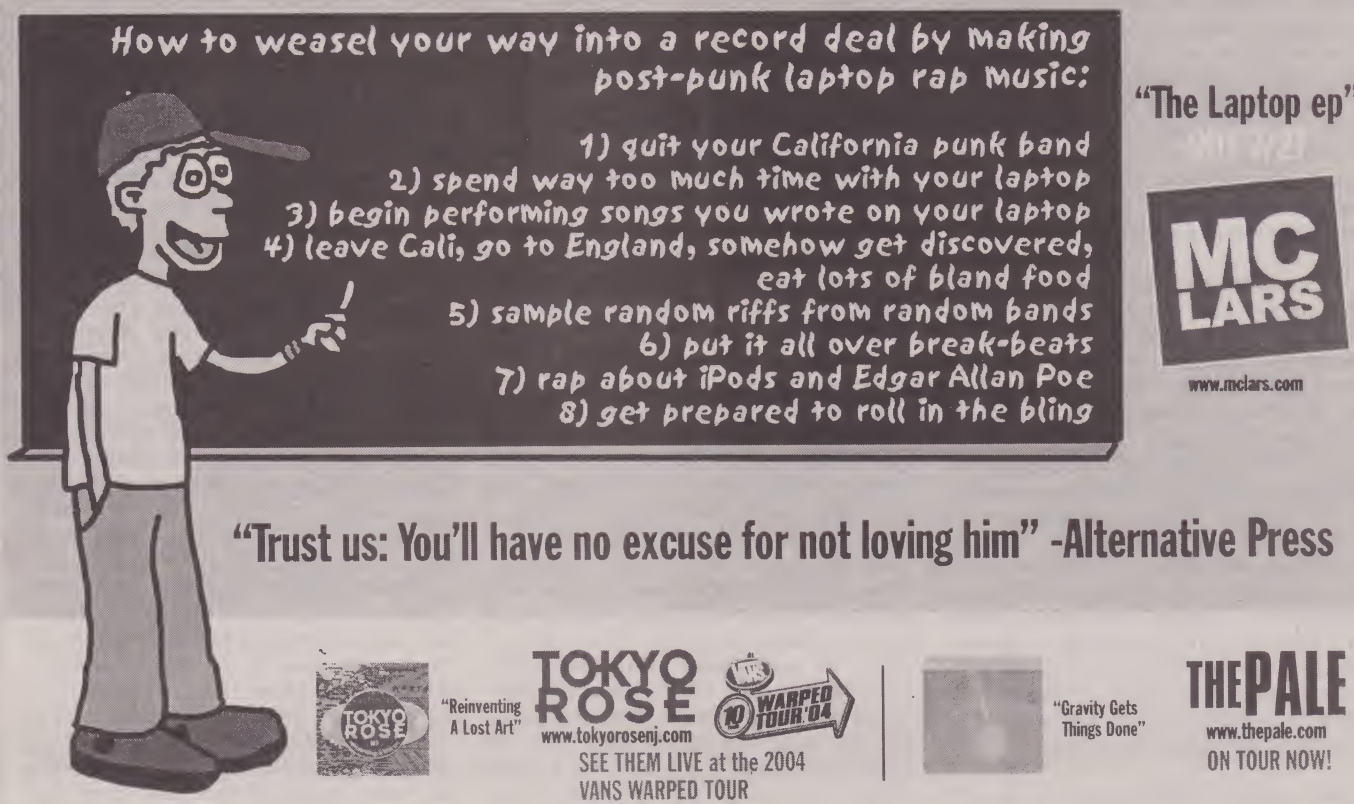
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NARCOLEPTIC YOUTH
46 SHORT
THE DISTRACTION
LAB RATS
FINAL SOLUTION

April 24, 2004
@ the Showcase Theatre (Corona, CA)
By Marcus Solomon

I have learned to embrace the headache created by Narcoleptic Youth. It was loud, raucous, silly rock 'n' roll infused with a subtle sense of irony and insight, but "Is this punk? / I don't know / Why don't you tell me?"

The show was off to a solid start with local boys Final Solution. A couple of local punk kids made it very clear that I was to pay close attention to this band, as it is one of the few decent ones from the Rancho Cucamonga area. This youthful trio pumped out some fine punk tunes that rather impressed me. Final Solution's sound is reminiscent of rough and tough early '80s British punk, but thankfully without the false accent that pollutes so many bands that play this type of music. My only criticism is that the songs all started to sound alike after a few numbers, but this problem will most likely be eliminated as the band members continue to aspire to their clearly-evident potential. The venue was packed from start to finish, and Final Solution clearly pleased the crowd.

Lab Rats then made its way to the stage and quickly drove me outside with its sloppy, trebly version of leather-glam-metal-thrashcore. It is always annoying for a band to take the stage and then waste time by taking WAY TOO LONG TO TUNE UP, and when the music finally began, I wondered, "Why bother tuning the instrument at all if that's how you are going to play?" The bass was so muddy that it just sounded like a constant reverberation without distinctive notes. The lead guitar was so high-pitched and sloppy that I cringed with pain. I refuse to comment on the vocals. I quickly escaped outside. The kids continued to slam, making me wonder if they really liked the band or if they just wanted to slam to something loud and fast.

I was outside interviewing 46 Short's guitarist during most of The Distraction's set. How appropriate! I did hear two songs upon re-entry to the club, and I liked what I heard. However, my buddy Jeremy came running up and said, "This band sucks! The lead singer punched my friend in the face!" I asked what happened and discovered that the vocalist thought one big guy was picking on a little guy, but he was unaware that they were friends just goofing around. He was trying to be a bit of a hero, but his friendly fire was unwarranted. But none of that had anything to do with the band's music. The Distractions reminded me a bit of The Briefs, but more with more traditional rock influence. The standout number was a cover of Link Wray's wild, feedback-infused, 1963 instrumental hit "Jack the Ripper". This tune may be 41 years old, but it still stands up strongly even in the midst of a wild punk show.

The evening really took off when 46 Short took over. Tight and intense, this band really brings the old-school sound of early-'80s punk rock into the present. Stop-start stop-start-stop...CHARGE! The kids started to line the margins of the stage on the front and both sides while steadily absorbing the enormous energy generated by the music. Soon, the immediate stage area was packed with fist-pumping punk kids who shouted every lyric—except, of course, for the songs from the new LP, JUST A LIABILITY. The surprising message in this album is the band's support of gun control. Hmmm. No wonder vocalist Jermey Jones always belts it out with such passionate sincerity: he believes in something and wants you to know it.

While anticipating the arrival of Narcoleptic Youth, we were treated to the atmospheric soundtrack to THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY. Vocalist Joey Bondage and crew then appeared within the swirling cloud of fragrant whiteness emanating from the smoke machine. The band was dressed in comical cowboy garb, complete with matching spray-painted neon pink cowboy hats, pink feather boas, and bandana masks. Joey was wearing a Lone Ranger mask and messy black lipstick and sloppy black Xs over his eyes. Now, the stage area was packed with anxious Narc fans. The set began with a banging crowd-favorite "Raw Nerve", and the place went wild. Kids were slamming all over the place, while multitudes of stage-divers reminded me of the (fictional) yearly lemming mass suicide. Narcoleptic Youth has a very strong Inland Empire following, thus allowing the band to lead masses of impressionable punk kids to take the exhilarating leap from the stage onto the heads of other jubilant concert-goers. At times the entire stage area was swarmed with multitudes of fans to the point where only drummer Johnny Cat Litter was visible. In a previous show review, I wrote that the sloppy playing of this group drove me outside, but this performance definitely won me over. The musicianship was tight, and the mood was intensely zany. Capping off my conversion to the Narc fan base was the excellent cover of my favorite song from The Damned, "Ignite!". Narc played one well-deserved encore and ended the evening with the ever-popular "Is This Punk? Thank you, Joey and crew, it was a fantastic time. www.narcolepticyouth.com

SNOW PATROL
CARINA ROUND

May 8, 2004
@ Epicentre (Mira Mesa, CA)
By Beth VanBoxtel

There aren't many all-ages shows in San Diego, CA, that consist of a crowd between the ages of 25 and 40. As my younger friend and I approached the venue, we couldn't help but notice the prominent tour bus consuming half of the venue's parking lot. An MTV2 crew was on hand at the venue to pass out stickers and information on their Advance Warning show. This show was the final one on the lengthy national tour, and the bands were prepared to put everything on the line and play a very relaxed show.

In the wake of PJ Harvey and other female solo artists making a name for them this year, Carina Round is emerging into the scene as being a solid, driven female artist with a power-packed band behind her. Her latest release, THE DISCONNECTION, came out on Interscope Records in the United States merely a few months ago. As she took the stage, the band jazzed fellow onlookers with fast-paced, straightforward metallic rock. Mangy guitars, pulsating drums, jazzy cymbal rides, and a thumping stand-up bass accompanied heartfelt, sexy, distraught, soulful vocals, creating a winning formula. The band pulled through an acoustic version of her song "Goldfish" that was pleasing on the ears. Throughout the set, Carina hit some very high-pitched notes that were dead on. The music was so classy that it left me feeling very satisfied with the entire performance. Look for Carina Round on the Lollapalooza Tour this summer.

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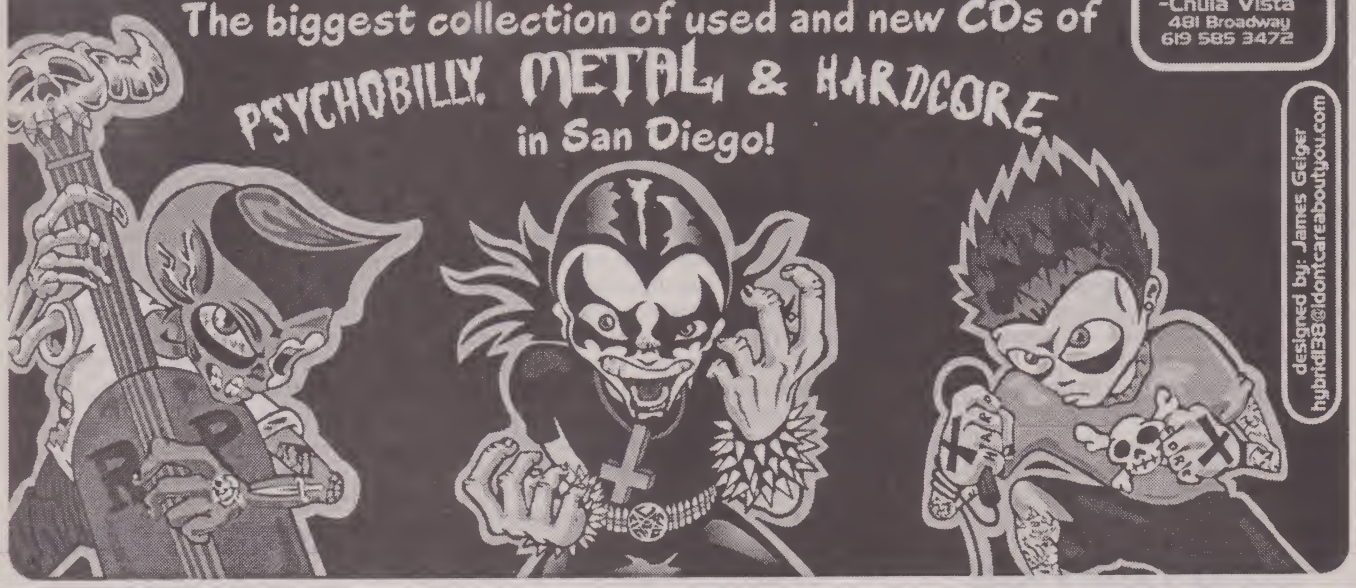

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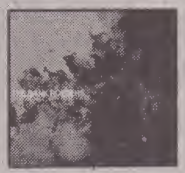

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Supporting their latest release, FINAL STRAW, Snow Patrol (from Ireland) had drawn much attention prior to this tour. Although this was a two-band lineup, the show was packed with people by the time Snow Patrol came out with a dramatic opening that included a drum solo and a dim array of lights cast down on the stage. Staying true to their Irish roots, the four guys brought their choice of alcohol with them. Staggering around, the band played carefully to stay tight. Laced with complicated intros to each song, this dashing young band appealed to all with their danceable, rocking-out style. The smooth sound mirrored that of Pete Yorn, with slight overtones of Interpol, and at times they were even as loose as Ben Kweller. Snow Patrol stood out with their original and conceptual melodies, flawless guitar riffs, and consistent and beautiful vocals that varied with each song. The keyboardist played on top of all these elements without being overbearing on the rest of the sound. The drummer (formerly with Belle & Sebastian) pounded out each fill with incomparable ability. Their ravishing set included such hits as "Spitting Games", "Ride Off", and "Never Break Your Sleep". Visit their Website at .

VOID CONTROL

May 20, 2004
@ King's Club (Centereach, NY)
By Janelle Jones

As the late Joey Ramone would say in "Beat on the Brat": "What can you do?" The turnout for the show at King's Club featuring punk-rock royals D.O.A. and The Dickies was alarmingly sparse. I must, however, give credit where credit's due: the meager amount of people who were there gave everything they had! The circle pits forming during D.O.A.'s set were viciousbut all in good fun, as most people in attendance did know each other. Hey, perhaps the measly crowd was due to the fact that on the same night at The Downtown (what I can only imagine to be an exorbitantly-priced show...though this King's Club gig was a bit pricey, as well), The Misfits (er, The Misfit?) played (now, don't get me wrong: the original lineup of this band is one of the brightest beacons of earlyhell, ALLAmerican punk, but come on! Enough's enough). Or perchance there just aren't that many hard-core punk fans who care anymore here on Long Island. OR, maybe most people who wanted to catch D.O.A. on their remarkable 25th Anniversary Tour caught the threesome at the absolutely stellar show the previous Monday at the Knitting Factory (though I did spot some awesome diehards at both showsyou know who you are!). Yes, Monday's showfeaturing the great MDC (!) and NYC's finest, New York Rel-Xwas quite an event. I hadn't been to a show that fun in a whileand I chalk most of the excitement felt to headliners D.O.A., who performed an immaculate and gloriously long set. Good god, were they tight!

Anyway, before I go off on any more tangents, D.O.A. played a wonderful set at King's Club, as well, though not as long, lacking the wonderful "America the Beautiful." No, I jest. They played tons of songs, old and new. First, though, a brief description of the band that preceded Canada's finest punk icons is in order. Arriving late and missing the first two bands (who I can only imagine played to maybe 10 people), the first impression of the night for me was Void Control, a young punk band who are traveling around the East Coast with D.O.A. (D.O.A.'s West Coast leg took place in March and April). Missing them on Monday, it was interesting to see what Void Control were about. Regrettably, the sound was brutal on the ears. Too achingly loud, too little basswhich only meant one thing: not good. I noticed more than a couple people sticking toilet paper orget this ingenious little trickcigarette filters in their ears to block out some of the guitar noise. Other than some nondescript originals, the four-piece belted out some cool covers of early greatsnamely, the godly D.I.'s "Guns" and Circle Jerks' sardonic "World up My Ass."

After a rather lengthy wait while D.O.A. set up, the crowd quickly moved up front in anticipation of the legendary Canadian band, which now consists of original member and man who keeps the band alive, vocalist/guitarist Joey Shithead Keithley, drummer the Great Baldini, and newest recruit and bassist Damned Dan Yaremko. After a rotating line-up through the years and sometimes playing as a four-piece, they sound really tight in their current form. Some songs these trailblazers ripped through were classics like "World War III"; the lightning fast gem "Waiting for You" (a song that, naturally, got the pit going crazyit's just a shame the bouncer was a Nazi. Would-be stage-divers were quickly deterred, as he tried to maintain some semblance of control over the rowdy crowd); their first single ever, "Disco Sucks" (which Joey prefaced appropriately by saying, "Some things never change"); and "New Age." We also were treated to a brand new composition called "We Don't Want No Goddamn War"VERY fitting, as Joey IS one of the most politically-minded frontmen in punk rock, a true pioneer who genuinely cares about humanity and the state of the world. Remember, this is a man who thrice ran for public office in his native Canada. Other newer hits included "Just Say No to the WTO" and the insane, bad-ass rocker "We're Drivin' to Hell N' Back" off 2002's WIN THE BATTLE. Other highlights included the dark "Liar for Hire," "Race Riot," and a rendition of the oldie "Fucked Up Ronnie" renovated for the new millennium as "Fucked Up Bush." Joe fashioned a lovely red, white, and blue "Fuck Bush" cap for the festivities. Also significant was the little Ramones tribute interlude during "Marijuana Motherfuckers," when they broke into that "Surfin' Bird" part with the outta-control "Mmm mau mau"s. Very nice, as the day before would've been Joey Ramone's 53rd birthday (RIP). The guys ended with the one-two punch of "The Enemy" and the frantic "The Prisoner" (both off their debut LP SOMETHING BETTER CHANGE) and quickly came back for an encore (they never even left the stage), as random yells of "Fuck You" were shouted by the crowd. No, they weren't pissed at D.O.A., but rather wanted to hear the old favorite that shares the same moniker. Brilliant set, and it was wonderful to see these guys (twice, at that!) after last catching them in '99. Being a true hypocrite, I didn't stay for The Dickies. Horribly wrong on my part...but they were going on at an ungodly hour.

PIEBALD
THE JEALOUS SOUND
THE FORMAT

May 20, 2004
@ the Knitting Factory (New York)
By Matthew Siblo

Just a few days ago I was engaged in a conversation with a co-worker about how oftentimes there exists a fundamental hypocrisy within the nuances and dynamics of rock 'n' roll and its fanbase. I hypothesized that since rock 'n' roll was a music that spoke directly to its fans on issues to which they could often relate, we very often find ourselves creating an interesting and most of the time unrealistically personal bond with its performers. This is true in punk music especially, it being a genre that formed around the idea that its performers are no different from those watch (although maybe it's not so these days). This can then lead to the selfish tendency to feel cheated when we feel that we've lost some of that intimacy we once shared with a band. As I've gotten older, I've learned to silence the ultimately immature and one-sided argument behind using the term "sell-out" and instead generally wish them well but stop following them. Sadly, this is the situation with Boston's favorite oddballs, Piebald. But in the name of nostalgia (a.k.a. the single known largest killer of rock 'n' roll integrity), I decided to give them one last shot on their recent trip to New York. Besides, that bond with the performer and audience works both ways. How many times do we buy a new album or see a band

live that we haven't listened to in years? Breaking up is always hard to do on all sides, especially when they were once the only friends that we had.

If I were British, I'd say that The Format is absolute rubbish. Since I am American, I'll have to suffice to use phrases to describe them such as "faceless morons" and "unintelligent pop-rock for 16-year-old girls who look toward WB shows for musical suggestions." This band was as uninspired and forgettable as their name suggests, and their uncanny knack for ripping off second-tier bands like Rooney and The Thrills was painstakingly accurate. One highlight included a cover of Billy Joel's "Moving Out", which made them sound more like a band who should be paid a hundred dollars to play a bar mitzvah rather than a punk show. Already signed to their second major after the collapse of Elektra, I wouldn't be surprised if they found themselves on a teen movie soundtrack or two in the very near future.

The Jealous Sound (who include former members of veteran emo act Knapsack) took the stage quietly and presented themselves modestly and humbly, which aptly set the tone for their entire set. The band's driving, earnest sound is quite familiar and appealing (if not just a tad bland in a live setting). Lead singer Blair Shenan's unique vocals help the band stand out among their contemporaries, but by the fifth or sixth track it's apparent that his melodies are quite unvarying, leading many of their songs to sound alike. Playing mostly stuff off their latest full-length KILL THEM WITH KINDNESS, their no-frills approach and big choruses eventually won me over but failed to strike with enough pizzazz for me to invest in the record. Interpret that as you will.

"We've got a job to do / And this is it!" Travis Shettel proudly shrieks in "The Monkey versus the Robot" (off their last album, WE'RE THE ONLY FRIENDS WE HAVE). Since then, Piebald has taken their "job" very seriously, touring endlessly for a solid year or two with everyone from The Juliana Theory to Cave In. The band is finally back with a new tour, a new label (the quite surprising choice of Side One Dummy), and a brand new record, ALL EARS, ALL EYES, ALL THE TIME. With all of that excitement said, from the samples they offered to the near-capacity crowd at the Knitting Factory, it seems as if the band might have been better off when they had kept their day jobs. Whereas the band has nobly matured by leaps and bounds from their earlier material, I can't help but detect a sense of frustration and confusion in where they wanted to go musically with this record. Travis's self-proclaimed "piano-power half-hour" sounded misdirected and out of place between schlocky, good-time anthems such as "Just a Simple Plan" and "Karate Chops for Everyone but Us". And while guitarist Aaron Stuart did his best to kick out the jams by frantically throwing himself about and partaking in the time-honored tradition of Townshend windmills, his efforts were just not enough. Mr. Shettel's once-glorious wailing has now been replaced by half-hearted attempts at normal vocal lines—and flat ones, at that. The band's set list was shaky, at best, and it has become strikingly apparent that the band is ready to move on from their older material. Overall, Piebald's set left me a little nostalgic, a little disappointed, and ultimately yearning for the past. And as I previously mentioned, it's hard not take such a transformation personally, just as it's hard to watch a band who no longer feel that strong connection that you once did. A long time ago, Mick said that it's only rock 'n' roll, but sometimes we can't help but feel it's so much more. Much to my chagrin, Piebald no longer has the power to do so for me.

FERRET MUSIC TOUR: ZAO SCARLET MISERY SIGNALS 12 TRIBES

May 23, 2004
@ Chain Reaction (Anaheim, CA)
By Darren Davis

As the doors of Chain Reaction opened, I managed to secure a position somewhere in between the kids who rush to the front of the stage and those who made a beeline to the merch tables. 12 Tribes was set to go on first, and they took the stage right on schedule in front of Chain Reaction's usually docile crowd.

The Ohio natives played their own brand of mid-tempo melodic metalcore. Vocalist Adam Jackson's singing voice was rather impressive, dabbling in a sort of rock opera style à la Killswitch Engaged. His confidence led to song after song of controlled vocal bliss. In fact, the entire band oozed the same confidence, as if they could tell we could tell they were polished and well-rehearsed. 12 Tribes radiated a constant energy throughout their set, which must have been a task in light of the drowsy crowd.I had been a fan of Misery Signals (Milwaukee natives featuring ex members of the late great 7 Angels 7 Plagues) since the release of their first EP on State of the Art Recordings. They played a blistering combination of 7a7p-like melodies with fast-paced, technically-driven breakdowns. They kept it fast, energetic, and blatantly angry. I was surprised to find that I knew almost every song they played. I was expecting most of their set to contain songs off of their upcoming Ferret Records debut, OF MALICE AND THE MAGNUM HEART, of which I've only heard two previously-released tracks, but it seemed that around half the songs were from the old record, while the others included the new tracks I had heard off of a wonderful thing called the Internet. The newer songs included "The Year My Summer Ended in June" and my personal favorite, "Five Years".

I was actually very impressed with Misery Signals' overall performance. They took what they were given and ran with it, and I'm sure that after their full-length comes out, they will be headlining tours of their own. Shortly after Misery Signals ended their set, a crew of anonymous henchmen hauled out a giant luminescent sign that read "SCARLET" in bold lettering, and propped it up behind the stage. It lit up like a Roman candle when the quintet took the stage. Scarlet's live performance was much like that sign: bright, flashy, and seizure-inducing. I had seen the Virginia natives twice before, and I had found both of those performances vibrant and entertaining. This show was no exception. Scarlet was just what the crowd needed to snap them out of their stupor and get moving. Vocalist Jon Spencer is Ferret Records' own personal rock star, his stage presence being that of a '90s arena rock frontman. He strutted around on stage with his long, spider-like arms dangling the mic over an ecstatic crowd. A sea of hands rose upwards as Spencer posted himself onto the monitor and loomed over the audience. The entire band seemed fueled by the sudden rush of energy the crowd was letting out. They managed to maintain this energy throughout a surprisingly long set, and as they played their last song, I found myself rather disappointed and hoped the crowd would call for an encore...but they did not. But there were no worries, for I knew who was coming up next.

When I was 13 years old, a friend of mine popped in one of ZAO's early records, and I remember being horrified. I never thought that six years later, not only would ZAO be high up on my list of all-time favorite bands, but that I would actually be reviewing one their show. But there I was, front and center, waiting anxiously for one of the giants in contemporary metalcore music to take the stage. They eventually made their entrance, and the crowd sounded an uproar as the quintet began to play, the people around me turning into animals, ravaging and scrounging for the stage. That is what I had been waiting for, and ZAO had delivered. The music was so thick and overwhelming that I had to stand back and let myself take it all in. There were many times when the vocalist stood silent as the sea of people recited the songs they grew up with. Those were the moments that made the

show. ZAO introduced many new songs off of their Ferret Records debut, THE FUNERAL OF GOD, the most memorable being "Praise the War Machine". However, a lot of the songs were from previous records. I believe I could speak for most of the people who attended the show by saying that it was the older songs that were the icing on the cake. Their guitarist provided comic relief between sets, poking fun at the band's infamous number of lineup changes the group has undergone. "We promise that this will never break up! This will never die!" the guitarist shouted at one point, igniting an uproar among the crowd. The entire band seemed truly sincere and touched by the crowd's enthusiasm. These guys had been on the road of months, yet they gave it everything they had (as I imagine they had done the night before, and the night before that). The show eventually winded down, ZAO as energetic as when they first took the stage. I left feeling punch drunk and strangely mystified. It had been a religious experience (pun intended).

ARTISTRY IN INK 2004

May 28, 2004
@ Anaheim Convention Center
(Anaheim, CA)
By Ian Wilkins

As you walk through the doorway of the Anaheim Convention center, you are not welcomed with a 1000-megawatt sound system, but the hum of a hundred little tattoo machines. Thinking I am either going to see some punk-rock freaks or 50-something Harley dudes, I am surprised by the whole age range. There was a booth selling infant wife-beater shirts...Fucking crazy.

There was probably over a 100 venders present, and that meant there was tons of ink being slung. *Heck-Do-Dee-Do, I was subject to it after a whole day of walking around getting blasted drinking beer. Which were the low, low price of five dollars for a 16-ounce plastic bottle.* One of the keys to a good convention is constant movement. Have isles that are wide enough so that people can walk down them without fucking the whole scenario up. I am proud to announce that I didn't spill a drop of my precious beer due to someone's elbow or stroller.

If you are into tattoos at all, then this place had everything your precious little heart desired. If you felt like having your upper lip pierced, no problem. If you felt like having a tribal tattoo done the old-fashioned way, no problem. Hell, if you felt like getting a new Living Dead Doll for your collection, then this was the convention for you. The only thing that wasn't prevalent was skin without ink (except maybe on that six-year-old kid I saw—but then even that's questionable. He was smoking a 420, after all).

When you get tired of seeing people grin with delight from the gun, you could always check out some...art? Yes, art. It is a medium most people don't even think about when it comes to tattoos, but let me tell you, it's the foundation for a sick skin flick. If you don't want to end up looking like 65-year-old sailor when you're 25, then you better get some cool art. One of the vendors was an art gallery called Ferguson Fine Arts. (When drinking, always get business cards.) They are located near the Covina area, and they had some sick shit on display. I have a few friends that collect that pin-up art, and Ferguson had tons of it. They also had some unbelievable original contemporary artwork done by Fred Litch, a young painter whose shows I have traveled to see. Seeing this kind of dope art in this setting almost made you wonder if you were in the right building. Then the buzzing comes back to you, and you move on.

Everybody thinks they have the best tattoo—and so of course the convention had to have a best-of-show pageant. Seeing this is the equivalent to AMERICAN IDOL, but with ink. There were some really, really bad tattoos that people thought were the fucking shit. There were portraits of Johnny Depp that looked like Desi Arnez. But also in that mix were some of the greatest tats I have ever seen. This one dude had his entire right side done up like an aquarium. It looked fucking real, damn I say. Taking the pictures for the event was none other than Billy Tenney. He has been the head photographer for TATTOO (magazine) for the past 100 years. This guy is the guy you want taking your tattoo pictures. I tried like a motherfucker to get a few words out of him, but he was way too busy to for little old me. He had only about 300 pictures to take in a few hours. Fucking insane. Did I take first place in the show you ask? No, no, not today, my friends. I didn't even enter. I know I should have. I did, however, meet some really cool people walking around. I met Rick from Electric Dragon Tattoo located in Canoga Park. This guy has to do my Gandhi tattoo on my neck when I get it. I was watching him do this Jesus tat, and I was amazed by the detail. What else can you leave with at a tattoo convention? A bed! In case you didn't realize, I am into the contemporary shit, and I like to show off my tats in style. There was this vendor, Ronnie Hodgsonm, who was, in my mind, best of the show. He wasn't tattooing but showing of his collection of dope furniture. If you are ever in the market for some sick wooden pieces call this guy at (626) 812-9613 (thanks again, business cards). Vendors like Ronnie and Ferguson—and even the Living Dead Doll people—kept the show from getting too monotonous. I had never been to a tattoo convention before, and never in my wildest delusions could I have expected what I saw. It was all cool to the eye and soothing on the ears. A fun day for you and, believe it or not, the whole family.

NAME TAKEN
FROM FIRST TO LAST
SAY ANYTHING
SCATTER THE ASHES
THE HIGHER

May 30, 2004
@ Chain Reaction (Anaheim, CA)
By Beth VanBoxtel

When a lineup such as this, I get motivated and excited to make the perilous, lengthy drive to Anaheim. All five bands listed on this show are backed by great indie labels, including Epitaph, Doghouse, and Fiddler Records. This label support only leaves one to think that each of these bands spend countless hours perfecting their sound and performance for an audience expecting great things from signed bands. As I witnessed this show, I was left feeling stunned and amazed by the efforts put forth.

One of the very few active bands to emerge out of Las Vegas is The Higher. Formerly named September Star, this young punk band has played some of the larger venues and attracted the attention of Fiddler Records less than a year ago. After the name change came a few suitable tour support offers, and they were able to produce an EP (STAR IS DEAD) with Beau Burchell (ex-Saosin). As The Higher began playing in front of a slightly crowded venue, the pop-punk music flowing from the amps and speakers was nothing less than I had expected. Held together by extremely tight drumming, and shredding guitars, the vocals were not at all straining from frontman Seth Trotter's mouth, hidden behind his long shaggy hair. To put it bluntly, The Higher is a well-rounded garage band that has found its place opening for other indie greats. My favorite song played during their set was "Couples Skate Only", in which the tempo was slowed greatly to match the movement on stage. Sample songs from their EP on .

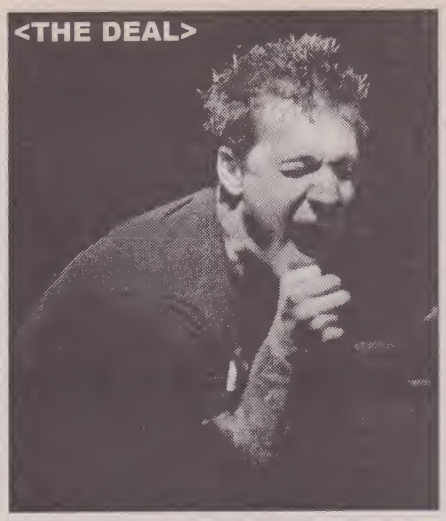
As Scatter the Ashes took center stage, I was baffled by the attempts this band had taken to present themselves as possibly one of the best-dressed bands of the year. This four-piece fashion-core group from Nashville stopped at nothing to supplement their image with fancy dance moves and hip-shaking action. Starting off with "City in the Sea" and "Caesura", I found myself hit with an extreme fascination with their choppy, punk, melodic pop music laced with smooth, friendly vocals. As they continued with "White Actress" and "Citadel", the crowd began dancing along. Merely

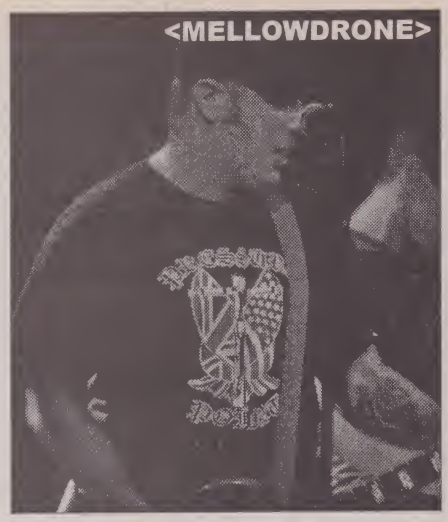
five days after the release of DEVOUT/THE MODERN HYMN, all songs featured in their set were from this album. After the announcement of their label association with Epitaph Records, everyone in the venue seemed shocked and paid much more attention to the group, as each song was followed with much applause. They closed the set was the song "Hour Benedictions", which was powerfully captivating, complete with fiercely sharp vocals, hints of keyboard and voice effects, and a full-sounding two-piece rhythm section.

Being placed on random shows and tours such as this, Say Anything is developing quite a following. Based in Fullerton, CA, this older rock group was ruthless in their attempts at performing to a crowd full of younger, trend-driven teens. Faster than I could imagine, I was quite impressed by the happy, upbeat, controlled new-punk sounds watered down by soft, pleasing falsetto vocals. Most of their songs (including "Yellow Cat/Red Cat") came from their upcoming album release on Doghouse Records. Check them out on tour with Audio Karate, MC Lars, and Lance's Hero in the coming months.

Undeniably one of my favorite bands on Epitaph—even after losing their original lead singer to Hope for the Best—this young, power-packed punk group has had its fair share of shortcomings along the way. Quickly finding vocalist Sonny from the Internet, From First to Last recorded and released a few unmastered songs onto the Internet to attract the likes of many. Compared to the previous time I had seen FFTL play a show, the band has stepped it up in terms of guitar fills, new intros, and excitement on stage. I applaud the fact that they really got the crowd moving. Although some of the songs weren't as tightly played as I had hoped, I was still impressed by their ability to pull off each song. Included in their set were "Note to Self", "My Heart Your Hands", and "Secrets Don't Make Friends" from their June 29 release, DEAR DIARY, MY TEENAGE ANGST HAS A BODY COUNT.

Closing the night with the local band nearly everyone stayed to see. Name Taken, a four-piece band from Orange, CA, was cheered on as they took the stage. As the newest add to the Fiddler Records family, NT released their album HOLD ON (produced by Beau Burchell) only a few months ago. Their set featured most songs from this, as the crowd got increasingly involved in sing-alongs and filling in the gaps where vocalist Chad Atkinson left off. I was pleased with the sound of each song that took on a lighter punk approach. They gave an outstanding and tight performance. Although I am not familiar with any of their songs, I hung around. They finished smoothly with appreciative applause from the audience and were invited back on stage to play an encore song.





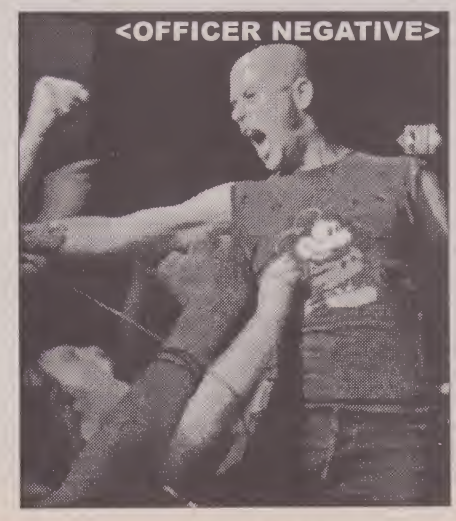
Officer Negative
the Deal
the Hanover Saints
the Scarred

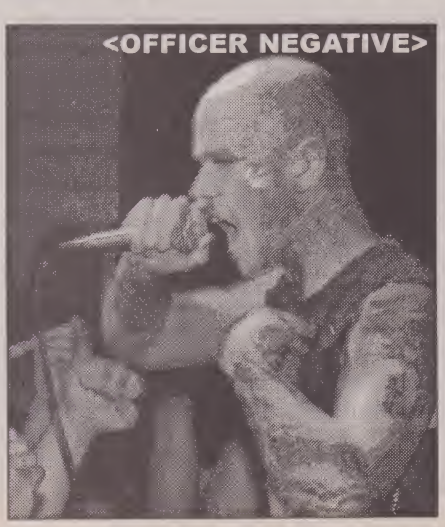
June 4, 2004
@ the Showcase Theatre (Corona, CA)
Text by
Photos by Chad Sengstock

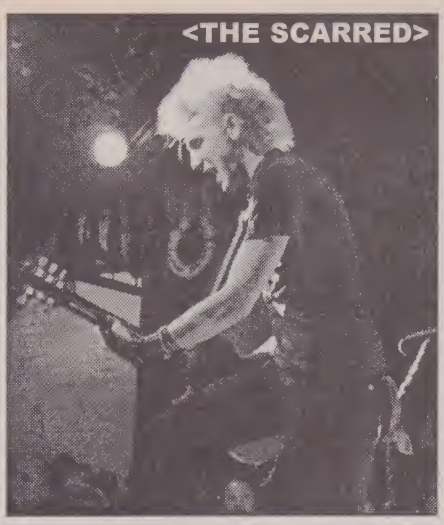
It is Jerry Seinfeld here, and I just wanted to say: what's the deal with The Deal? Okay, I just had to say that, but tonight's show was insanely good. Sometimes when you go to the Showcase Theatre, you get a huge stoke off without the goodies, but tonight was insane for punk rock (or whatever is considered punk rock by you youngsters nowadays).

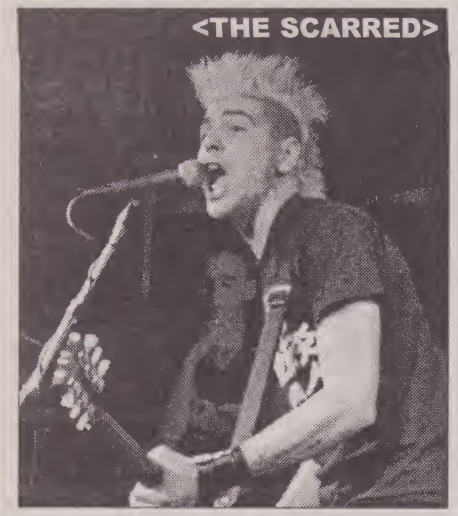
SKRATCH has done reviews in the past for The Scarred. Dane Jackson, one our CD reviewers, has compared them to the legendary band The Sex Pistols. Here's a direct quote: "When listening to The Scarred, think a Sex Pistols for the 21st century with more musical ability." Now, that might have been taking it a little too far, but not THAT far. When The Sex Pistols were at their prime, they were still a bunch of rookies—similar to The Scarred now (although I hope this is not the latter's prime). Only starting in the past year, they have already taken over a bunch of shit. Their debut album is called REPRESSION, and it totally kicks ass. The Scarred have the DIY mentality, and it shows in everything they are doing. They book their own shows and even drive their own buses. They really do do it all.

The Hanover Saints were not the best band of the night, and in my opinion they probably should have opened the show with the way they were playing, but they were still a fun band to see. The Hanover Saints have a history of playing great shows, but tonight I have a feeling that I saw them on when of their off nights. With an old-school punk-rock feel, the band is going to have you leaving the show with a little extra bounce in your step. They have a new album out called BLOOD, GUTS AND GLORY (on the Strike First label). Regrettably for all of us, you have to go to...to...(okay, I am just going to say it) Hot Topic to pick up the album—OR go buy it online at .
If you have never heard or seen The Deal, then check this band out. You know you will be doing that middle-finger-flash thing. They rip so hard that even the gay guys will be going, "I wish they had used a bit of lube." The Deal is four fucking guys who abuse their instruments like an priest









abuses the fourth grade. It is insane and fast as fuck, but with a tinge of style. The Deal have played with countless great bands, like DI, TSOL, and (my favorite band) The Adicts, so it was no wonder that they blew me away...again. 10 more words is all I have to waste to get (it has now been 420 words to this spot) to that point. (I feel satisfied.) I am not really sure what to say about The Deal...other than that they were the best band I saw that night. And it was all for free. That's right—I paid nothing.

Officer Negative approaches the stage with about a 100 people standing around. Did I say a 100? Okay, make that 101, 'cause I am there. How can you take screaming and ripping guitars and get this? Fuck if I know, but they did it. This was a band that made me shit pants—and I was happy about it. You take the average four guys in a band, flip the cards, and this is what you get: fast, hard, and "fuck you" is again what you're going to hear. Officer Negative is one of those bands that you really don't want your daughter seeing, 'cause it is going to corrupt her for sure. It is fast, but with a twist. Fuck, what do I have to do to go get you to see them? Alright, I wrote my review, and now you should go.

Normally when going to the Showcase Theatre, I feel a bit of dread. There's no alcohol of any kind and a bunch of little wannabes who have no idea what music is all about. Tonight's show hasn't changed the way I feel about the venue. Then again, it doesn't matter what the house looks like it—it is all about how you decorate it, right? The bands of the night were fantastic, and I hope to see them all again in the near future.

BANG SUGAR BANG
THE DOLLYROTS
THE ADJUSTMENTS

June 7, 2004
@ Punk Rock Prom (Silver Lake, CA)
By Ian Wilkins

The Punk Rock Prom is a venue that has been around forever in Los Angeles. It has been the launching pad for way-too-many-to-list music careers. The venue was packed an hour before the show, and parking was pretty much "you're going to get a ticket if you dare to park here"-type shit. By the time I finally got inside, I was ready for some air-conditioning and a drink—both of which were delivered in a timely fashion.

The Adjustments were the first in the tactical line to take on the now- 200-plus crowd. With a punk-rock drummer, a guitarist from hell, a classically-trained pianist, a horn man that would could blow the brass right of the instrument (now, don't be a fucking pervert and put to much into that last remark), and a bassist that uses his stings to kill the crowd like an archer would. This was music at its greatest. If you're familiar with the band Melee, then you might have an idea of what The Adjustments sounded like. If you don't know who Melee is, then just imagine if you took all of the members different backgrounds, threw them all into a blender, and they added a eight ball of coke. It was high-energy fun with a side of soul. If you smart and want to check them out, then go to www.theadjustments.com.

Quicker than you can say "I'm spicy" (Jack in the Box reference), The Dollyrots were ready to go. The crowd was so packed in at this point that it was basically "I am going to stand on your shoulders, and you're going to like it bitch" (that is a real quote). The Dollyrots have been playing the Los Angeles club scene for some time now and are featured on the new HP commercial. It was amazing the kind of energy that these three can produce right after a U.S. tour promoting their new album, EAT MY HEART OUT. Starting their set off with "Feed, Me, Pet Me", it took the crowd all of about two minutes to start a polka pit (that's the kind of pit, where you walk away with a new friend and not a broken nose). After playing a 45-minute, mind-blistering, punk-rock roller-coaster ride, The Dollyrots finished with only one encore ,"Dance With Me". I didn't get to meet them after the show, but I went to their Website (www.thedollyrots.com) to find out their names for you. Kelly is the lead singer, and boys, let me tell you, she is a great vocalist/bassist (you need to see her). Lewis was the guitarist/back-up vocalist. He was the shit, as far as all that goes. Drummer Josh I have seen in other bands before, and I thought he was good then, and now he is only better at beating the shit out of those damn drum things. Having an '80s pop happy feel to them, this band is original and truly worth your time to check out.

The club could probably hold around 500 people. Tonight I swear there were over 800 heads. This show wasn't publicized at all, and there was still a fucking mob. Bang Sugar Bang is another band located in the L.A. region. Having seen them twice before, I was peeing in my pants with delight when they first came on. Opening with my favorite song of the year, "She's So Up", Bang Sugar Bang kept going non-stop for 45 minutes. If you're getting tired of all the bullshit punk that is out there and want to hear some Pixies-influenced type shit then, Bang Sugar Bang is the band for you. Sharing the microphone, Matt and Copper are a couple of fucking nuts who know who the true god is: BEER. BSB music is like off-roading in a Mini Cooper. It will leave your nuts jumping and your head rattled (or maybe that's the other way around). They play often at the Kiss or Kill club on Tuesday nights, but if you're smart, you can find out more about them or when they are playing at www.bangsugarbang.com.

With so much attention being placed on the Orange County, let's not forget that there are some great bands that are coming out of the Los Angeles area. If you're tired of the same shit, then it might be because you keep shitting on the same toilet. Expand your horizons, little ones.

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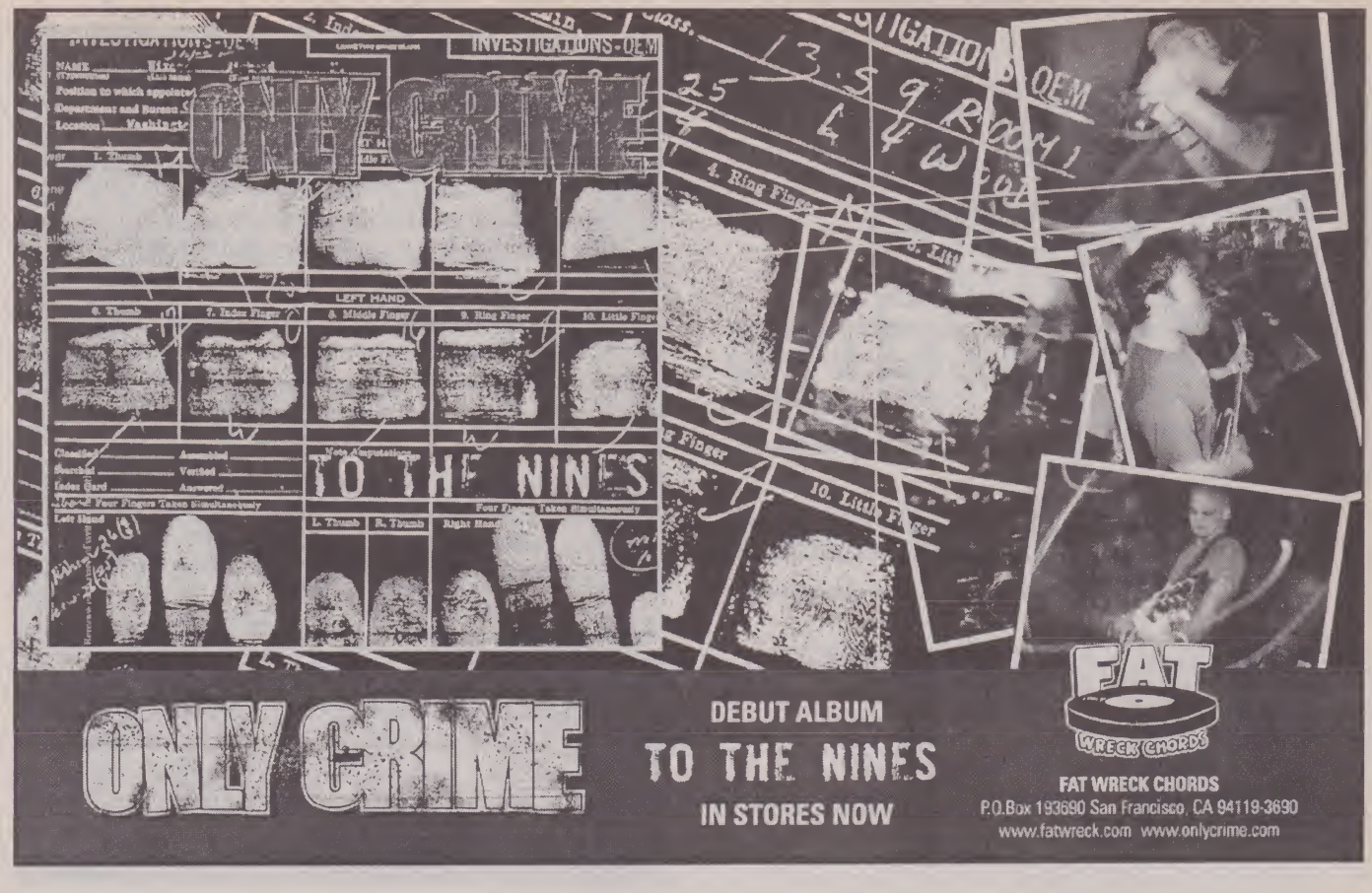
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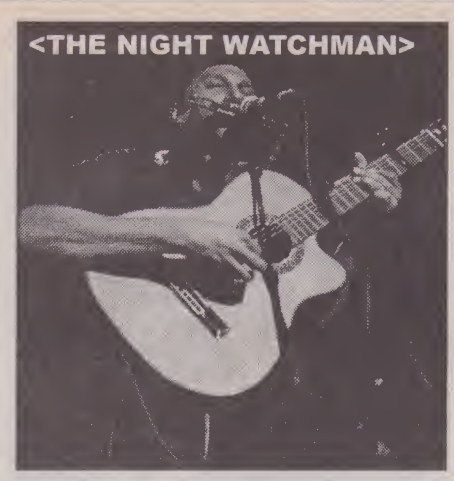
ANTI FLAG
DEATH BY STEREO
THE NIGHT WATCHMAN
PIPEDOWN

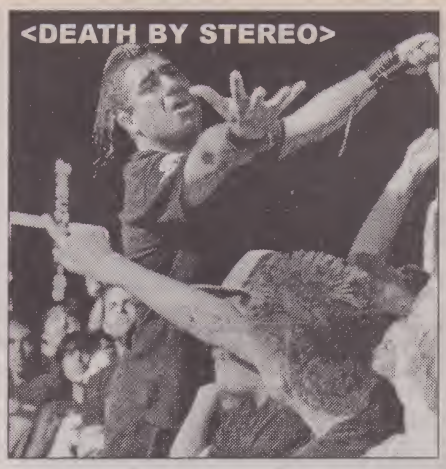
June 8, 2004 @ the Roxy (West Hollywood, CA)
Text by the Jeff Penalty
Photos by Ryan Harlin

You probably really wanted to go to this show but couldn't get a ticket, right? Well, you were right to want to go. You missed what was possibly the best show of 2004.

Pipedown welcomed the packed house with an above-average hardcore set. Things were a little chilly when they first stepped on stage, proving that just because the crowd is psyched for the show doesn't mean the first opening band's job is any easier. But Pipedown didn't, uh, pipe down; they turned up the juice and won over some new fans. They are, as I like to say, good stuff.

The crowd was then treated to an excellent change of pace as the curtains rose on Tom Morello (a.k.a. The Night Watchman). I challenge anyone to argue with the fact that Tom is, by far, one of the best guitarists in rock history. Takers? I didn't think so. As The Night Watchman, Tom channeled his chops through a classical acoustic and played a subdued set of original protest songs, showcasing both his range as a guitarist and his baritone voice. The crowd, surprisingly, got it and listened receptively. The songs were mostly political, and one included a mid-song shout out to "the L.A. grocery workers, who are fucking heroes!" (Just so we're all on the same page: the L.A. grocery-workers strike was of national and historical importance because if the tens of thousands of employees of Safeway and Kroger had rolled over and accepted a 50% cut in their healthcare benefits and a mediocre "two-tier" wage system, it would have set a disturbing precedent as far as what kind of poor labor practices corporations can get away with.

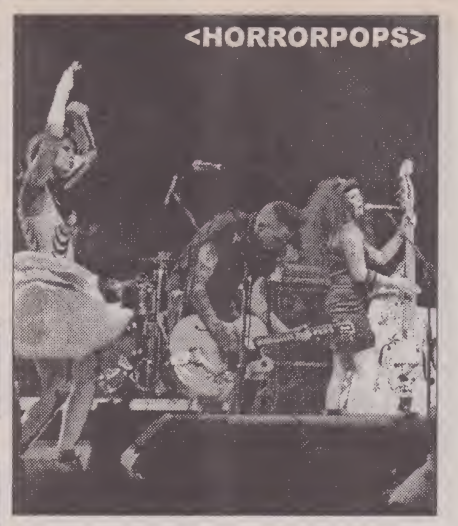


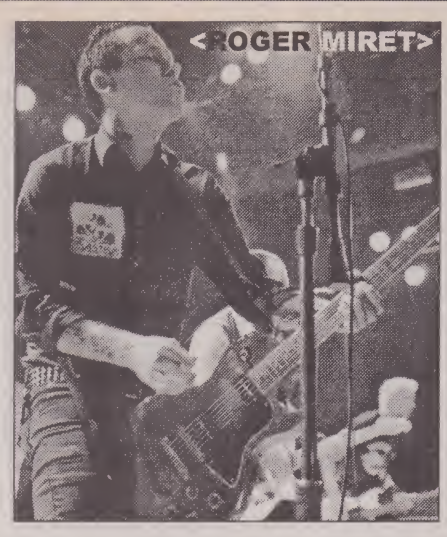


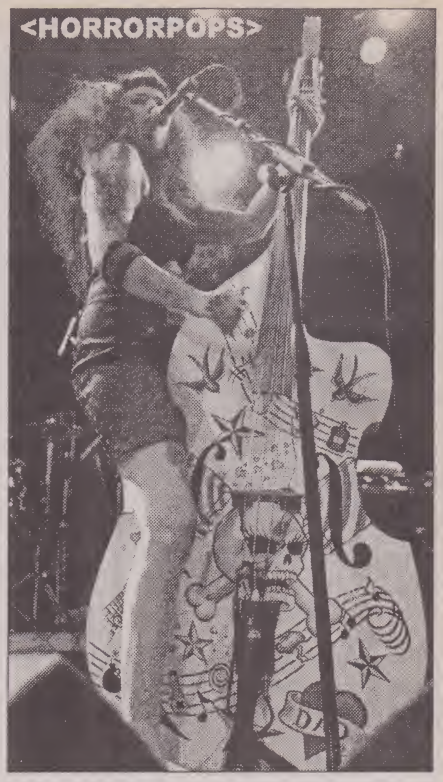
Such cuts would have been copied by other big companies, just as Safeway and Kroger were trying to copy them from Wal-Mart. Unabated, such practices will eventually spread and slowly become commonplace and soon enough you (yes, you!) will be left without any of the benefits or protections that union workers have fought so hard to put in place over the years (e.g., THE WEEKEND!). The striking workers had to endure all kinds of hardships to fight that battle, and we should ALL be thanking them and giving them hugs every time we visit one of their stores. Okay?)

Death by Stereo revved the evening's musical engines up again, and soon things were running past the red. I'd never seen them live and had no idea that what I'd been missing was the musical equivalent of having jumper cables shoved into one's eye sockets—in a good way! Their "third guitarist" was playing an awesome skull-shaped guitar that I later learned was fake. That, my friends, is pure showmanship. Beyond that, their entire set was a blur, because even though I was standing way in the back, their face-pummeling display of metal-core power made me feel like I was in the middle of the pit. How's THAT for an endorsement? (One small note here for the shirtless, muscle-bound meathead dude in the pit: Please do not walk around the perimeter of the pit and shove people who are simply watching the show. We're not impressed. In fact, we're all thinking to ourselves that you probably have a very small penis, and also that you are a latent homosexual. We don't think any less of you for being gay, we just think it's sad that you hide behind a macho façade instead of coming to terms with your sexuality. Be honest with yourself and stop trying to start a fight in your pathetic attempt to overcompensate.)

Meatheads aside, the show was moving along beautifully, and things got even more beautiful when Anti-Flag pumped a stadium's worth of energy into this 500-person-capacity club. I've seen Anti-Flag numerous times over the course of about eight years, and I'm not exaggerating when I say this show was absolutely the best I've ever seen them play. The sound at the Roxy was impeccable, the band's performance was note perfect, and they earned every bead of sweat they generated from both among themselves and the audience. Every song felt like a classic—even the newer material. Not only was their set fluid and fierce, but it turns out that it came just hours after the band had endured a transcontinental flight, which made it twice as impressive! Clearly, Anti-Flag has reached a new level in their development. They've taken a big step up from where they were as songwriters and showmen just a couple years ago (which was already a big step up from where they were a few years before that). That growth, plus the energy provided by the opening bands, plus the intimacy of the Roxy, added up to an amazing live music experience. And you totally fucking missed it. Go forth and hate yourself. On second thought, don't do that. You're a good person deep down, and you can make a difference in this world. In the spirit of all the politically-minded bands on this bill, funnel your rage and frustration into a force for positive change. I'll leave you with a very cool Web address, , and a quote from The Night Watchman: "Take a step towards freedom, and it'll take two steps towards you."







PUNKS VS. PSYCHOS TOUR:
LARS FREDERIKSEN AND THE BASTARDS
NEKROMANTIX
ROGER MIRET AND THE DISASTERS
HORRORPOPS

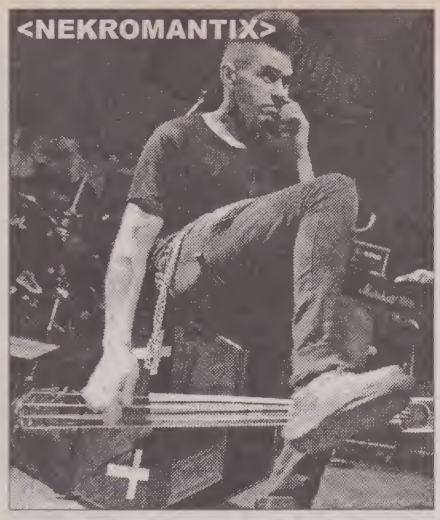
June 11, 2004
@ House of Blues (Hollywood, CA)
By Jennifer Moncayo
Photos by David JiRo

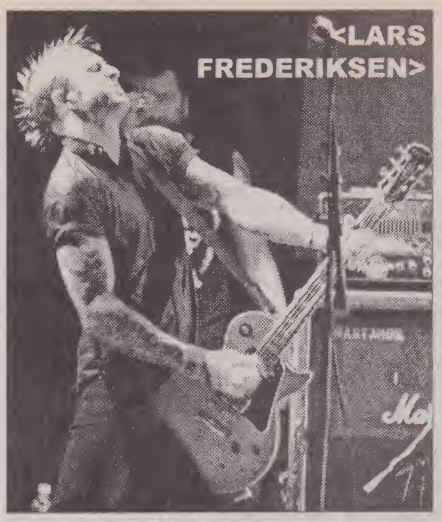
In usual House of Blues fashion, the Punks vs. Psycho Tour was kicked off quite early, with doors opening at 6 p.m. and drinks costing a fortune. Despite the early opening, many people showed up to see the first band, Horrorpops. Emerging from Copenhagan, Denmark, Horrorpops play their own style of psychobilly-infused rock music. The band is led by female singer and upright bassist Patricia. She is joined by her husband on guitar, Kim Nekroman (who plays upright bass in Nekromantix). They are accompanied by Neidermeier on drums, Karsten on guitar, and two dancing ladies who jump around on stage lifting their skirts and shaking their tushes for the world to see. By the time I got inside, Horrorpops were already halfway through their set. Patricia is quite the looker, as she has definite style, stage presence, and a sexy accent. As she sings and the band rocks out, they have their go-go dancers shaking their asses around the stage. Patricia announced that one of the dancers was new and from Texas. Not to be cruel or anything, but she looked a little more uncomfortable and self-conscious than the other go-go dancer, who was stealing all of the attention by simply being herself. I thought the dancing go-gos would get on my nerves—it sounds a little cheesy—but it actually complemented the band and their style. The band's performance was energetic, upbeat, and rich with crowd participation. For the song "Miss Take", Patricia asked the crowd to sing along with the back-up vocals, which she demonstrated prior to beginning the song. They also played a ska-like number and asked the crowd to skank along with them. Overall, they had a great performance, as they got the crowd pumped, sang their hearts out, and really demonstrated why there is so much hype about their band.

Roger Miret and the Disasters powered their way on to the stage, singing their hardcore anthems to get the crowd moving and angry. Lead singer and guitarist Roger Miret (formerly of Agnostic Front) is accompanied by several other leaders of the NYC punk/hardcore scene, such as Johnny Kray on drums, Johnny Rioux on bass, and Rhys Kill on guitar. They played a fun-filled set, including their cover of Cocksparrer's classic "England Belongs to Me" (changing it to "New York Belongs to Me"). They even played Agnostic Front's "Gotta Go", which was quite a crowd favorite. Their set also included "Punch the Clock" and "It's Alright", among others.

Nekroman pulled a double shift, playing another set with his psychobilly rock band Nekromantix. Nekromantix are a three-piece from Denmark, with Nekroman on upright bass and vocals and brothers Peter Sandorff on guitar and Kristian Sandorff on drums. The crowd was packed in like sardines, and the smell of B.O. began to waft through the air. Nekroman rocked out with this bass, twirling it around, throwing it up in the air, and laying it on the ground while still playing it. While Nekroman was rocking out, he was making funny faces, sticking out his tongue, twirling it around a million miles a minute at the crowd, and even licking his bass. My friend and I were joking that perhaps his tongue action explained why his wife looked happily married. On a less perverted note, their set included songs which displayed their love for horror, ghosts, and death, such as "Dead Girls Don't Cry", "Subcultural Girl" (which they dedicated to all the females in the audience), and "Who Killed the Cheerleader" (which he dedicated to Britney Spears). They put on a good show that both the punks and psychos could appreciate.

When Lars Frederiksen and the Bastards took the stage, I was waiting for Lars to take the stage, but once I focused the pupils I realized he was already on stage—I just didn't recognize him. He had longer, combed-back, blond hair and a very scruffy face. Another new development was the unknown bastard is no longer unknown: his mask has come off—and if you didn't already figure it out, it is Gordy, lead singer of The Forgotten. As for the other bastards, Craig (formerly of The Forgotten) was on guitar, Big Jay Bastard on bass, and Scott Abels on drums. The band rocked out, running around the stage and having a great time. Lars commented that although the tour was termed "punks vs. psychos," he proclaimed that there is no "versus" and instead it was "the punks and psychos tour." He also joked that it should be called the Danish invasion tour. They even had the flag of Denmark as their backdrop which he dedicated to Nekromantix and Horrorpops. Lars also dedicated my favorite song, "To Have and to Have Not" (cover of Billy Brag), to his best friend, Tim, who was standing in the balcony. Their set also included "Dead American", "Skunx", "Wine and Roses", as well as new songs of their next album, VIKING. Skinhead Rob of The Transplants also came out with a joint in hand and helped sing one of their new songs. The Bastards graced the audience with an encore, which included an old Rancid song (sung by Gordy), and they closed the show with "Vietnam". It was a great show that displayed their talent and love for music and performing.





It was a successful Punks vs. Psycho tour, with an equal distribution of good bands for both audiences and musical tastes. The only drawback of the night was that it ended so early, with the whole party ending before 11.

AUDIO KARATE
DOGWOOD
DYNAMITE BOY
MISERARE

June 12, 2004
@ the Glass House (Pomona, CA)
By Mabel Lam

Strolling into the Glass House at 7:30 was juuuust the right time, not too early to have to sit outside in line on the cold, concrete floor, and not too late to have to wiggle my way into a crowd during the second band. This likeliness to Goldilocks's porridge made me all too hungry. Small groups of kids were still idly floating around chatting comfortably with each other. This sense of ease and familiarity not usually seen in huge, sold-out shows probably stems from the fact that both Miserare and Audio Karate's roots are in the local L.A. area (be it Rosemead, Whittier, or Montebello). Cries of recognition abound, bear hugs left and right. Ah, yes. Bears. I needed some food, quick. After braving the 10 freeway with my friend, I would say that the food would be well-deserved. One of my favorite things to do while I'm down at the Glass House is head down to the Mexican restaurant at the corner of the block. Seriously. Do your stomach a favor, (though I can't speak for your bowels if you O.D. on beans) and order yourself a shrimp taco and rice the next time you're down at the Glass House.

Now in a slightly more cheerful mood, we made our way back. It wasn't long before Miserare (formerly Seraphin) jumped right into their set. Their gratitude and support for the upcoming bands was apparent, since frontman Gilbert Romero was sporting an Audio Karate shirt and guitarist Albert Martinez a Dynamite Boy shirt. For five lanky guys, they sure can muster up a lot of power. What appealed to me most of all was how deeply immersed they all were into their own music. No cheesy gimmicks here. Romero had his eyes shut as he into each song, luring in the crowd with delicate melodies, and then bursting into fervent cries.

After a rather speedy stage set-up, Dynamite Boy seized the stage and all attention within the entire room. Lead singer and guitarist Sean "Dynamite" didn't just request that the audience fill in the gaps, he demanded it. However, two or three songs into their set, a gaping mosh pit opened up right in the heart of the floor, and the kids threw themselves into the center of the frenzy. Keeping the rapid pace alive, they urged all to chant "OI!" leading up to a cover of AC/DC. I initially thought them to be pop-punk, but then I changed my mind and decided they were pop/rock. But that didn't feel right either. Then, a little window popped up in my head: punk rock? Could it be? I've been so jaded by the "punk rock" scene that I haven't spoken it in forever...but yes, they do indeed encompass what should define punk rock nowadays. Their energy came pouring out in torrents through the amps, through the vocal chords, through their sweat beads flying down on the masses. Lovely.

Now that the crowd had warmed up, they thirsted for more excitement. This feeling grew when the stage suddenly went pitch-black. Silence fell as a booming voice introduced Dogwood in the manner of a roller-coast ride at Disneyland. Not letting the audience down, Dogwood adequately catered to their need for more action, to say the least. Kids sang along enthusiastically, bouncing around to the beats. I, on the other hand, wasn't too particularly taken by them. Their drummer looked like a chubbier version of my ex, and that alone was enough of a distraction. But majority wins, right? My conclusion on Dogwood: lovely.

With the heat rising into the air and the buzzing of the impatient masses, when Audio Karate strode out, everything built up from the night was let loose. Your average, inhibited high-school girlies screamed out sexual propositions to guitarist Jason Camacho. There was a pogoing circle pit, a mosh pit, but, ironically enough, no karate dancing! If they weren't celebrating their latest release, LADY MELODY, with songs such as "Jesus Is Alive", "Hey Maria", and "Catch and Release", they were bringing back old familiar favorites off of SPACE CAMP like "Rosemead", "Car Ride Home", and "Jason". Appropriately, for many graduating seniors (such as myself), they just about concluded the night with "Senior Year", satisfying all with their surge of pop-punk.

THE ADICTS
ANGRY SAMOANS
D.I.
NARCOLEPTIC YOUTH
SIDEKICK

June 12, 2004
@ Malibu Inn (Malibu, CA)
By Jennifer Moncayo

The Malibu Inn is located on PCH, with the beautiful ocean across the street. The club only sold tickets online, and when people arrived, the club declared the show 18 and over. Well, a large percentage of the online ticket buyers were under 18, so they still let them in, but they didn't let in kids who walked up, which sucked. However, I can't complain, as one of the guys who worked there was kind enough to let me in even though my name wasn't put on the list. This puts the Malibu Inn on my good list—plus the fact that it contains two bars, two pool tables, and an outside area where people can sit and eat or hang out and drink.
After enjoying the outdoor drinking atmosphere, D.I. took the stage wearing paper Ronald Reagan masks. They

were making a timely social critique, as former President Ronald Reagan had just passed away. Their masks and their comments got the crowd riled up as many cheered "Fuck Reagan" as they went into the song "Reagan der Furhrer". D.I. is an O.C. band, and despite the Malibu location, there seemed to be several O.C. fans. At one point, there was even a white woman with an O.C. tattoo on her arm. The pit was huge, and in the middle of their set a fight broke out, which several good Samaritans tried to help quell, but it didn't happen until the band stepped in and asked the jockos to calm down. There was also a population of white men who thought they were too cool and buff, so they had to take off their shirts and walk around like they were hot shit (which they were not: it was more like they smelled like shit and looked like assholes). Regardless, the band was fantastic. They had the crowd energized and participating, as they played songs like "Johnny's Got a Problem" and "Guns".

The remaining ensemble of the '80s L.A. band Angry Samoans took the stage to unleash their humorous and punchy style of punk rock. Singer Mike Saunders came out with a Lizzy McGuire record, which he held up like Vanna White for the crowd to see. After playing great songs like "Right Side of My Mind" and "Hot Cars", singer Mike switched with drummer Bill Vockeroth and they played the song made famous by Pee Wee Herman, "Tequila" by The Champs. They invited people on stage for a dance contest, in which my boyfriend was the first to accept the challenge by jumping on stage and doing his Pee Wee dance. A few more people jumped up, but their dancing skills were under par, and then Bill pulled up a wasted woman with a hoochie short skirt and heels to dance. When the song finished and the contest was over, she just kept dancing like she was on GIRLS GONE WILD. As the nasty audience we were, people started booing, and then some girl standing on the side of the stage walked up to the wannabe stripper and pushed her to the floor. The drunken lady looked so pissed as she squirmed on the floor tripping over her heels. When she finally got up, she stomped over to the girl who shoved her and gave her a hug. The set continued, and the crowd and energy was at a high, as people jumped on and off stage, grabbing the mic trying to sing and just be a part of the show. The audience was intense and pushing to the front, leaving everyone squished and sweaty as they played "Homo-sexual", "Inside My Brain", "Get Off the Air", and "My Old Man's a Fatso".

After a LONG wait, The Adicts finally graced the stage. As the band walked out on stage, the song from A CLOCKWORK ORANGE was playing, and then the band came out and played Beethoven's "Ode to Joy". They then went right into their first song, "Viva La Revolucion", and Monkey jumped on stage with a bag of goodies. Monkey was dressed in his usual flashy, colorful, and spandex attire—with a painted face—while the band wore all white. The crowd was going crazy, as people were being thrown on stage and jumping over people to sing their favorite songs. They played an array of their songs, including "Bad Boy", "Joker in the Pack", "Troubadour", "California", and "How Sad". As a band with such longevity, talent, and fantastic songs, they managed to please the crowd and play an array of their classic songs, as well as some new songs off their new album, ROLLERCOASTER. When the band told the crowd they were going to sing a new song, someone screamed out "Naughty Girl", and Monkey started laughing, saying the only way they knew the song was from a bootleg copy. The new songs they played lived up to their reputation. Throughout the show, Monkey continuously threw confetti all over the place, and the keyboardist threw himself on the floor and put his face in a pile of confetti. After playing a fun-filled set, the band left and came back for an encore, playing even more of their wonderful songs, like "Numbers", and "Songs of Praise".

It was a great night, filled with a great lineup and performances that pleased the crowd...or, at least, me.

7 SECONDS
PIPEDOWN
RED TAPE

June 20, 2004
@ Chain Reaction (Anaheim, CA)
By the Jeff Penalty

With all the killer shows I've been to lately, I keep thinking that eventually my luck will run out and I'll go to a show where I'm totally bored and nothing good happens. Not tonight, though. Not by a fucking long shot.

I'm sad to say I missed Red Tape's entire set due to a guest-list snafu, so I offer my apologies. From outside, they sounded okay. Fast, loud, hardcore stuff. My friend Jenny said they were "fine," which is a pretty big compliment coming from her. Then again, we disagree on a lot of things where music is concerned, so who knows?

Pipedown opened for Anti-Flag at the last amazing show I went to, so I was looking forward to seeing them again. At that show, it took them a little while to get warmed up, but at this show they hit terminal velocity the moment they hit the stage. I have but one complaint about this band, and that is the singer's lack of inventiveness when it comes to stage banter. A lot of "Is everyone having a good time?" and "How's everybody doing tonight?" kind of comments. Other than that, the guy has an undeniable stage presence, and the band gives a good name to new-school hardcore. If I had to offer some constructive criticism, I'd say work on the between-song speeches. Just trying to help!

The crowd packed in tight as 7 Seconds prepared to take the stage. I figured most of the crowd would be a bit older, and that it would be smaller, considering the band hasn't put out any new material in a long time; but I was pleasantly surprised to see that the band still gets the respect it deserves from the kids, who filled the place and knew every word. I got as close to the stage as I could, desperate for a chance to "whoa-oh-oh" along with the band. I was slightly skeptical about what kind of performance they'd be able to deliver, not having toured in over three years and being, well, kinda old (I mean, let's just be honest); but my skepticism was pulverized out of existence by the end of the first song. The set was full of classics from THE CREW and WALK TOGETHER, ROCK TOGETHER, as well as scattered tunes from other albums (including their newest, which is slated for release this fall). For longtime fans of the band, the new stuff sounds very promising, a return to the sound that made them great in the first place. Where the hell do they get the energy? Maybe it's all that coffee Kevin's been brewing lately.

Chain Reaction has a well-known "no stage-diving" policy, but tonight it was resoundingly ignored by crowd and the staff alike. The place just went off, plain and simple. I think everyone in attendance was equally blown away by the power of the performance. At the end of the night, the band treated us to a hard and fast two-song encore, for which I could barely stand. But I figured that if the band has the energy to dish it out, I'd better find the energy to take it. So back to the front I went with my fist in the air and my lungs on the verge of collapse as I sang along: "Use your...head! Be...aware! Give...a...FUCK!!!" I was completely worked by the end of it all. I was fully drained of all emotional and physical energy. I was sore and bruised. I was drenched in sweat. I didn't fully catch my breath until I was halfway home. It was not unlike getting off a roller coaster. And wanting to go again. It was as though 7 Seconds had been hanging out up on Mt. Olympus, allowing us mortals to entertain ourselves with our pathetic attempts to make music, and then, like the Zeus of hardcore, they descended upon us with the thunder and lightning of this show to remind us how it's really done. I remain in awe.

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Skratch 100th Issue Party
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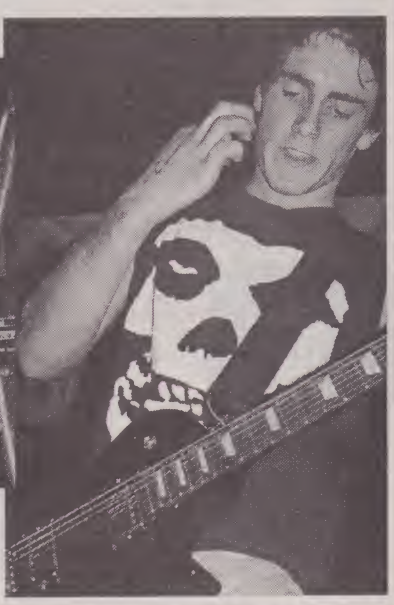

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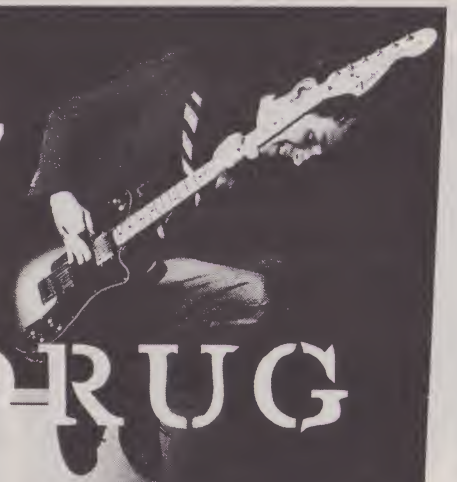

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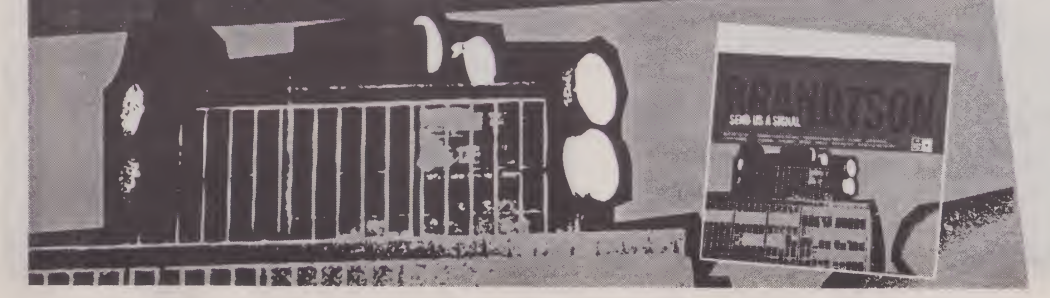

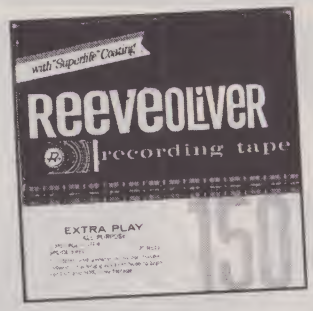

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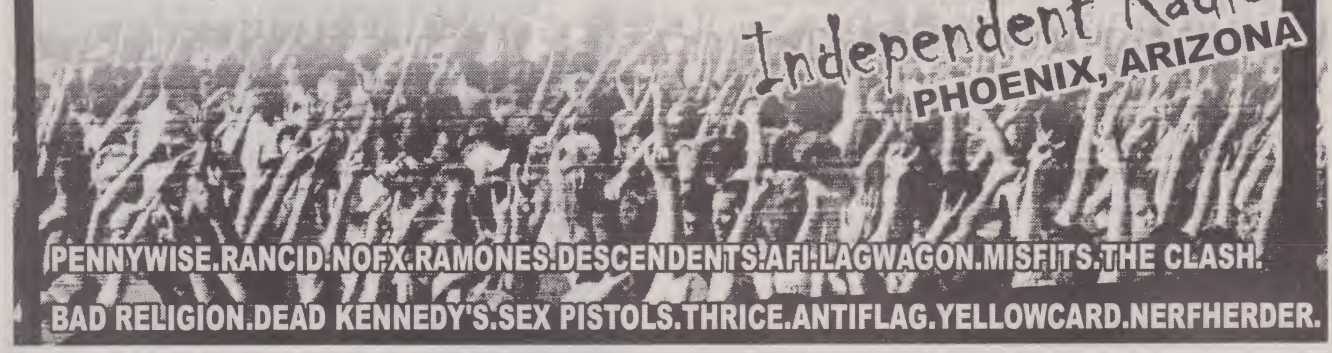
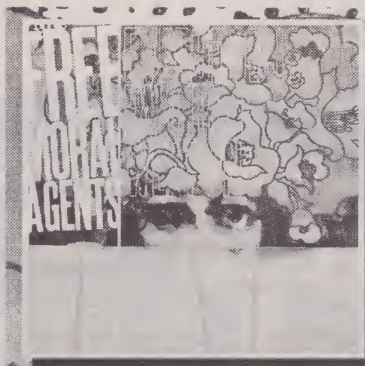


PENNYWISE.RANCID.NOFX.RAMONES.DESCENDENTS.AFI.LAGWAGON.MISFITS.THE CLASH.
BAD RELIGION.DEAD KENNEDY'S.SEX PISTOLS.THRICE.ANTIFLAG.YELLOWCARD.NERFHERDER.

FREE MORAL AGENTS



"Ikey" Owens is the boisterous keyboard maestro in **THE MARS VOLTA**. He's also performed and/or recorded with SHUGGIE OTIS, PREFUSE 73, WAILING SOULS, and HR, to name only a few. With the production skills of Jeff Harris and vocal contributions from rapper J and the ethereal Mendee Ichikawa, Everybody's Favorite Weapon is a colorful journey through the rainbow of sounds lurking within Ikey's brain...

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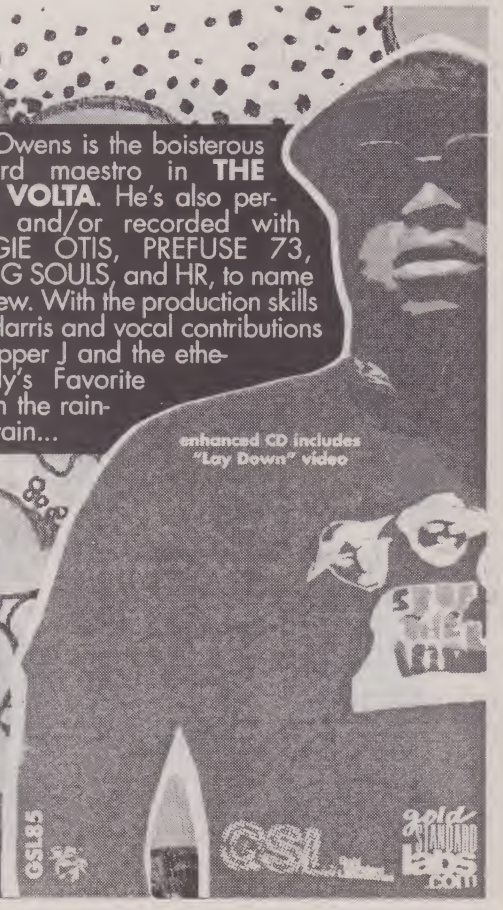

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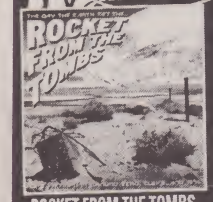

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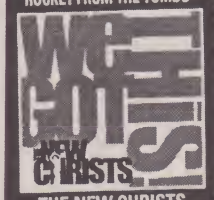

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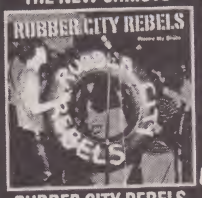

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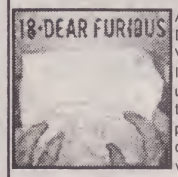
where do they come up with this crap?

A COMMON GROUND
WAITING FOR A CHANGE TO COME
TRIPLE THREAT RECORDS
A Common Ground certainly are on common ground, because they sound like every other pop-punk band to make a record in the last 12 years. And I imagine we'll still be waiting for a change to come, because this certainly isn't a change from anything else I've heard in the last 12 years. (I'm so full of puns. I'm a triple threat! Anyway, back to business.) This band is a yawn. They have energy, but their songs are redundant and dull. They're just following a dried-up pop-punk songwriting formula, at best. A Common Ground is from Germany.

-chad

A PERFECT MURDER
UNBROKEN
VICTORY RECORDS
The fact that "A Perfect Murder is not here to reinvent the wheel" is made painfully obvious on their Victory debut. They do not succeed in proving that "good metal core is alive and well," eitherunless they do so by using their album to prove what not to do. A Perfect Murder has succeeded in making a perfectly bland album. The simple lyrics, the clichØd song titles, the pedestrian vocals, and trite breakdowns don't exalt their genre but show all that is boring about metalcore.

-Erika Owens



A18
DEAR FURIOUS
VICTORY
If I have to compare one more band to Hatebreed, I'm gonna puke up my power bars and steroids. But here's A18, and it's hard not to think of Jasta and the crew. Never mind, this has a rawer, more punked-out feel, anyway. And Paul Miner ain't no nu-metal producer (thank the fuck). Miner gives these hardcore, SoCal scene vets (members have played in Insted, Outspoken, and Strife) the kind of no-frills production job that works best with this positive yet agro-sounding hardcore. It's all by the numbers and done to death...but, hey, give me the pitbull scream and gang vocals and I'm rarely disappointed...until track 4 or 5 hits, then I'm usually bored. Gotta love the vocal lead-in to "Stab You through the Everything", though. "I FUCKING HATE YOOOOOOOUUUU!!!!!" Nice, guys. www.victoryrecords.com

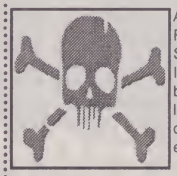
-Jason Schreurs

AGE OF JETS
GO GO GADGET POP
DAMAGED GOODS
Back when I was about 15, when I was first getting into punk rock, I bought my very first 7" from Damaged Goods, so it's good to see them still on the ball and releasing good DIY records when so many others seem to be dying like flies (see Rugger Bugger). This is breezy indie-pop from Leeds that kind of sounds like Blur or Stony Sleep collaborating with some strange intergalactic electro superstar, such is the amount of bleepy electro glitches and sparkly Atom and His Package-style keyboard effects illuminating each tune. It's an utterly compelling listen the album bursting with all manner of lo-fi electronic gadgetry. In a thousand years time, when robots rule the Earth, they will ALL be dancing to Age of Jets.www.ageofjets.co.uk /

-Matthew Hocking

AMBER PACIFIC
FADING DAYS
HOPELESS RECORDS
Take one part emo, add one part pop-punk, and you got yourself one hell of a concoction, simply titled Amber Pacific. In a field overgrown with verminous bands that sound like they came from the same mother, Hopeless Records have found efflorescence in Amber Pacific. The boys in Amber Pacific have not invented perpetual motion here, but they've released an EP so infectious that you will want to check yourself into the nearest psych ward, because the tunes won't leave your head. At only 19, singer Matt Young holds nothing back at the helm, relentlessly belting out lyrics of love and loss. "Good times last forever / I'll keep my heart with yours" is a taste of what's cooking on FADING DAYS. Heavy guitars combined with bass-driven melodies back Matt Young's heartfelt lyrics, creating a delicious palate for the ears. Fans of the ever-popular emo and pop-punk sound should not let this band pass them by, but with tunes this infectious, it is only a matter of time before you hear the unstoppable machine known as Amber Pacific.

-Brent Sheen



ANGELSTORM
RISE FROM THE ASH
SET-FIRE RECORDS
I was greatly surprised to learn after looking at this CD cover that this band is Christian. The lyrics are sickeningly positive and filled with lines such as "There'll be no more drive-by shootings" or "White puffy clouds fill the sky"; yet the music is traditional heavy metal. If you enjoy Christian metal, you will be jumping for joy with this one.

-Ringo

ARTIMUS PYLE
FUCKED FROM BIRTH
PRANK
Remember when hardcore bands actually had something to say and said it with rage, frustration, and maybe even a bit of hope? Artimus Pyle don't have many contemporaries these days, what with all of the hairspray being pumped into the ozonebut that makes them all the more vital. Only bands like From Ashes Rise, Tragedy, and Corrupted still raise a stink like these San Fran maniacs. It's grindy, manic hardcore with massive breakdowns and a chunkier sound that you'd expect from this kind of crustier hardcore. The lyrics attack the Bush era with much fervor, making FUCKED FROM BIRTH a loud, angry, flaming winner! www.prankrecords com

-Jason Schreurs

BLUEPRINT CAR CRASH
RHETORIC OF A MARIONETTE
THE MILITIA GROUP RECORDS
Punk + metal + emo = many of the bands that labels are releasing these days. When it became hip to melt genres of underground music together, many bands jumped on the train. Blueprint Car Crash is not the first band to do this, nor will it be the last. The group sounds like some of its contemporaries in Christiansen and Anatomy of a Ghost. There is nothing either groundbreaking nor truly captivating in this record, just another lackluster album of progressive melodic metal. The band is very talented at mixing the aforementioned styles, but it seems to do so at the cost of listener accessible songs. The songs seem to simply go on and onkind of boring, if you ask me.

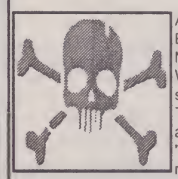
-ADF

wannabe reviewer: Erika

DESCRIPTION OF HOW I EAT: smorgasbord
WHAT I CAN DO WITH MY MOUTH: rip, break, mold, smile and make others do the same.
I TRY TO ALWAYS: prevent the preventable and not be an idiot.

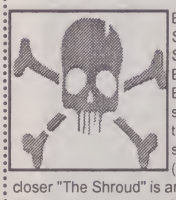
ALKALINE TRIO/ONE MAN ARMY
BYO SPLIT SERIES/VOLUME V
BYO
BYO Records have catalogued yet another one of their split series, this time teaming Alkaline Trio with One Man Army. Neither band outdoes the other, but they both produce high-quality tunes that fans of either band will want to get their hands on. Reuniting with producer Matt Allison, Alkaline Trio have created six devilishly dark tracks that will win lost fans back after last year's somewhat disappointing GOOD MOURNING. One Man Army fires up the second half of the split with six upbeat songs that pay homage to the classic punk rock sound. Singer Jack Dalyrymple's unique vocal sound shines brilliantly throughout the tracks. This release should not be ignored. Another successful split for BYO.

-Brent Sheen



AMAZING LARRY
BEAT THE CLOCK
NORTH COUNTY PRESS
Wow, I guess the music scene in Durango, CO, is very isolated, as it seems that lame, badly-recorded pop-punk bands are still in fashion. There's definitely nothing amazing about Amazing Larry, nor is their album worth a listen. The recording is horrible, the lyrics are lame (ex.: "I want to walk around, I want to walk around town, I want to go out at night"), and the music leaves something left to be desired. If you read this review and you're from Durango, may the music gods have mercy on your souls.

-ADF



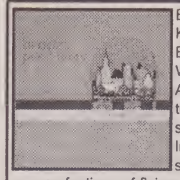
BOULEVARD
SIGNAL
SELF-RELEASED
Boulevard is a new-wave, post-modern pop group via The Beatles to Bowie to Roxy Music to Cheap Trick to the Finn brothers' Split Enz and so on. The voice of Boulevard Benji Barton is Zanderliscous. Some of the top-shelf moments are disc opener "Boundless" (which features some keyboard work from 1982 by Emily Beard), "Octane Lovers" (which features a chorus melody that will haunt you for days), and disc closer "The Shroud" is an FM hit for the young lovers. SIGNAL is a six-song demo for sale. The group wears the style of past greats in a shameless way that seems to be on one hand tribute and on the other clever and just damn good. SIGNAL is authentic. Haling from Athens, GA, Boulevard is a band ready to be invited into the big leagues. SIGNAL is a good rock album.

-H. Barry Zimmerman

BREAKING BENJAMIN
WE ARE NOT ALONE
HOLLYWOOD RECORDS
Sharing the stage with bands like Godsmack, Three Doors Down and Fuel, don't expect Breaking Benjamin to be breaking new ground. WE ARE NOT ALONE is an OK record, however, in that it mines away at modern riff-rock. Tracks like "So Cold" and "Follow" are pretty damn catchy with their electric guitar machismo, and tracks like "Forget It" are a bit more tender. Smashing Pumpkins luminary Billy Corgan had a hand in the songwriting. Nevertheless, WE ARE NOT ALONE is...what it is.

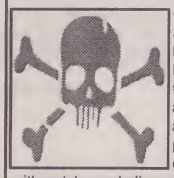
-Darren Ratner

music that rocks is better than great sex.



BREEZY PORTICOS
KEEP IT CRISP
BEST FRIENDS RECORDS
With melodies structured by the monotone and nearly emotionless Andy Falconetti (whom often reminds of Gordon Gano), this Denver trio produces some eccentrically tight patchwork pop. Their guitars softly grind, spotlighting solos like a dozen springs lazily uncoiling. Intellectual with ease, the lyrics show few hints at laboring over such smart-assed cynicism and wistful disconnection. Breezy Porticos arouse feelings of flying too close to the ground behind their gracefully flawed pop familiarity.

-Rob Macy

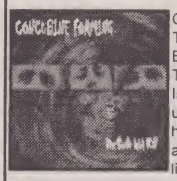


CARRIER
S/T
HIDEAWAY
From the forested mountains of Colorado comes Carrier, a new band formed from some other band's ex-members who have an approachable and extremely likeable sound. Take the '90s out of Dinosaur Jr., add more guitar to The Flaming Lips, combine the two, and you're pretty close to Carrier. They still manage to come off unique, however, with a sound all their own, mixing clean and crunchy guitar sounds with catchy melodies and pretty male vocals that often resemble a straighter Perry Farrell. Best when listened to sitting on a windowsill with a glass of wine on a rainy Saturday overlooking a bustling city street. I would honestly rate this as one of the best CDs I've heard this year. It doesnt come out until August 3, 2004, but you can hear the album and watch home videos at www.carriercarrier.com

-Small

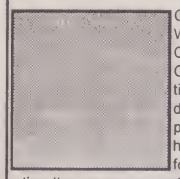
CASPER AND THE COOKIES
HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO ME RECORDS
Coming out of Athens, Casper and the Cookies present a brilliant pop collection. They manage to incorporate elements from '60s surf, '70s power pop, and '80s new wave to create a sound that changes with each track. About half the album would probably be enjoyed by anyone into the Athens indie scene, but the other half is specifically for the nice-guy, dorky types who are really glad indie pop got so popular. If you're looking for sentiment, look elsewhere, but if you seek la la happy kiddy pop, this is right up your alley. In summary, this album can be filed with Of Montreal, Elf Power, and The Beach Boys.

-Small



CONCUBINE FORMING
THE GUILT WILL KILL
BIG NECK RECORDS
The band's name is rivaled in atrociousness only by its music. Industrial music should be left to Germans and Al Jourgenson; and the unbridled angst thing lost most of its credibility after IN UTERO. But hey, this negative feedback shouldn't come as a complete surprise, as any band with a producer named Jerry Reatard (actual spelling in the liner notes, honest!) and a Playskool Weebles drum machine probably didn't have too high hopes to begin with.

-Casey Clague



COREY HEASLIP
WIRING OURSELVES UP
COMSCO RECORDS
Corey Heaslip seems to write from an autobiographical perch at all times. Aiming towards his bitterness on doomed relationships with doomed women and eagerness towards using nice days and breaking personal monotony, he takes on pop topics in compelling ways. But his compelling words stretch too far at times to work. Often he is focusing more on telling the story and being true to his prose than creating the necessary melodies to make the songs flow easily. His quivering voice rarely displays a different chord structure, instead building the soundscape differently to break the monotony, covering fuzz drones to James Taylor-aping quiet bits.

-Rob Macy

COUNTRY CLUB AND THE PORN HORNS
THE STATIONWAGON REVOLUTION
SELF-RELEASED
Although the band's intentions can be misleading, the name is apparently not a phallic reference: a porn horn seems to be a method of playing brass instruments in a sexy manner. CCPH succeed in doing so on "Travel", the sixth track on the disc, while the rest of the songs are an eclectic blend of surf, ska, punk, jazz, and rock. Whilst the band attempts to woo the masses with their tunes, they are secretly planning a military siege with a station wagon as their Trojan horse. Good thinking on their part, as no one will ever see it coming, except that they sort of advertised their plan in the record's title. That probably wasn't a good move.

-Casey Clague

DARK TRANQUILITY
EXPOSURES IN RETROSPECT
CENTURY MEDIA
Dark Tranquility has done something quite unique with this release. One CD is the all the songs from the LIVE DAMAGE DVD. The other CD has a lot of unreleased songs that never made it to the full-length LPs, and the remaining five are new songs that are just fantastic. Every Dark Tranquility or Gothenburg metal fan should pick this up immediately. Dark Tranquility will be around for a long time, and their songs will only get better. "Cornered" sounds hardly like any of DT's other work, but it's still quite amazing and original. With a great price, too, don't miss out on this one!

-Ringo

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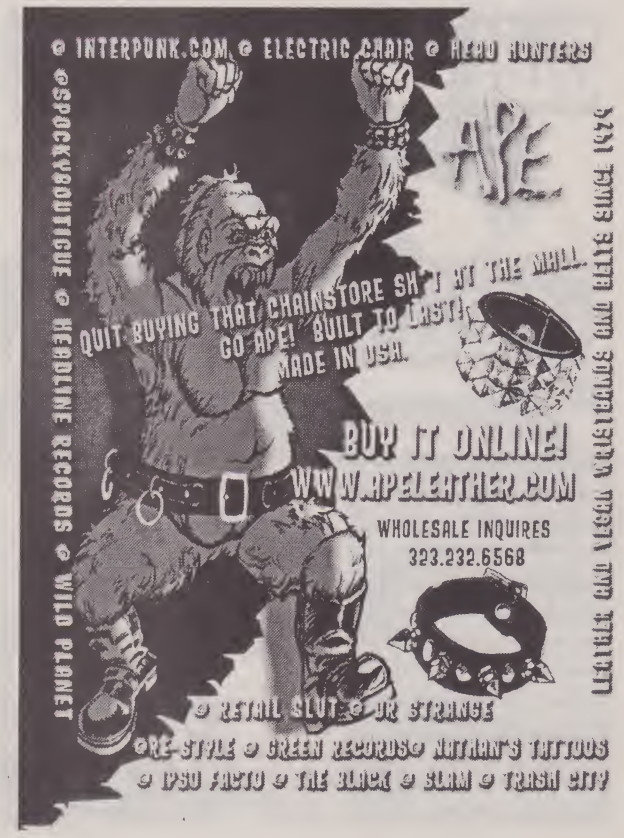

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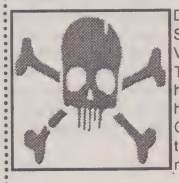
DIMLAIA
DIMLAIA
LIFE IS ABUSE

It turns out that people do more than listen to country music and eat at Cracker Barrel up in Nashville. The folks in Dimlaia, for instance, just released this cloudy prog-metal record and had it mixed by Dave Ed of one of the genre's most renowned masters, Neurosis. Here, sweeping arpeggios lurk in the key of Tool and cleanse away the traces of screamo that float to the surface from time to time before becoming enveloped in ever-waxing currents of murky and mathy technical instrumentalism. The music isn't half bad, and I'd probably even listen to DIMLAIA again if it weren't for the other side of the coin, which concerns context more than content. The album's recording is less than amazing, and these potentially mountain-moving songs could have been brought across much more powerfully with a better, more layered recording job. Dimlaia would have done well here to cough up a credit card or five and allow their thunderous sounds to take on a more commanding form.

-Dave Kargol



DOG FACED GODS
STONED COUNCIL
VOODOO NATION RECORDS

This album intrigued me. It was a sort of blend of garage rock and heavy alternative, with an interesting touch. Apparently, big things are happening for this band, with Ozzfest, the Warped Tour, and the Cypress Hill Smoke Out tour. Good for them, as they deserve it for their hard work. Pick up this album if you're into alternative rock. It may be just what you're looking for.

-Ringo

DOWN TO EARTH APPROACH
ANOTHER INVENTION
VAGRANT

Unlike so many acts of their ilk, the typical layered, crunchy guitars hang from some of descent hooks and spotlight harmonies that actually flow. Down to Earth Approach has a much better grasp on the punk songwriting structure than most, but it still needs to pop. However, when a band from Batavia, NY, adopts the punk sound of glorious SoCal and not gutter NYC, you have to question what originality is behind the influence.

-Rob Macy

DYNAMITE BOY
SELF-TITLED
FEARLESS RECORDS

Whenever I'm ready to verbally bash pop-punk for all its cliches and constant repetition, there comes a band like Dynamite Boy. Like a lot of records of the same genre, this self-titled record has nothing on it that wouldn't make you think of Warped Tour times. Bright and shiny chords are where they should be, anthem antics pervail and the lyrics are of that teenage, early twentysomething honesty. But hell, I listened to Dynamite Boy, and for a while, couldn't stop listening. The addictive reality check of "Man of the Year" has me by the ears. Help!!

-Darren Ratner

FANG

LIVE CHEAP CD
MALT SODA RECORDS

Here comes a punk band from Northern California that started in the 1980s and never let it go. Fang has been playing the same style of old-school, straight-ahead punk for 20 years and has finally released its own version of a greatest hit(s) record. Nothing new here, just simple balls-out thrash punk. Lines such as "We'll fuck you mom / We'd fuck your sister, too, but we're too old" are really damn funny. I can't stand to listen to this record too many times, but Fang definitely sounds like a group I want to see live.

-ADF

FEAR AND TREMBLING
WOODCUT RECORDS

An EP that manages to drag three songs out for 23 minutes does not appear particularly inviting at first, but Fear and Trembling are able to use the lengthy songs to create a unified effort. The songs are heavily reliant on a simple instrumental style, which ebbs and flows throughout the record, with vocals used sparingly. Deep, hollow singing fleshes out the quiet strumming that dominates the album. "A scream without a sound" is cried during the final song, which exemplifies the approach of Fear and Trembling. Their music shouts without even raising its voice. This approach is also analogous to the silhouettes in the album artwork. As the light shines away and leaves a shadow, the stripped-down sound of Fear and Trembling leaves a simple, intriguing outline

-Erika Owens

FEAR MY THOUGHTS
THE GREAT COLLAPSE
LIFEFORCE RECORDS

Okay, Lifeforce, European, and metalcoreyou know what you're getting into here. And Fear My Thoughts certainly do not disappoint; but they don't challenge or engage new listeners, either. Their quick, heavy, thick sound has clearly been crafted from years of experience and creates a crisp, complete sound. Cavernous vocals are paired with higher-pitched yelling, which offers a welcome variance to the metallic scaling monotony. On "Mission Immortality", a more upbeat, punk-edged sound is presented, and the album closes out with a diverse sound, including piano on "Reign". Fear My Thoughts clearly have the metalcore thing down, and should stick with it. The infusion of other sounds doesn't add much, but their metal expertise and passion are sure to captivate current fans.

-Erika Owens

i'm so tired of the generic shite out lately.

FOREVER IS FORGOTTEN
DYING BEAUTIFUL
THORP RECORDS
Their band name screams out "GENERIC HARDCORE!" While the hardcore part is true, they are in no way mediocre. The uniqueness of "Dying Beautiful" features eerie chords backed by a distinct bass. They get all the melodic crap out of the way in the first track, "Fallen for". Everything after that of this six-track release is an assault of beautiful pain to the eardrums. The ferocity of their lead singer is undeniable. On their last (live) track, one guy can even be heard yelling out, "Why are you so mad?"

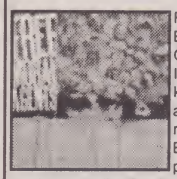
-Mabel Lam

4FT FINGERS
A CAUSE FOR CONCERN
GOLF
Having already proved themselves as one of the most hardest-working bands in the U.K. punk scene, 4ft Fingers are pulling no punches with their latest effort, presenting 12 tracks of unpolished and pretty uninspiring melodic punk. Although it is refreshingly a million miles away from the overly-plagiarised SoCal style that every kid with a guitar seems to be emulating at the moment, there are some pretty weak melodies here, and the fact that they're captured through less-than-average production makes A CAUSE FOR CONCERN an ironic title for a band who should take things back to the drawing board. www.plastichead.com

-Matthew Hocking

FRANKENIXON
AMORPHOUS
BI-FI RECORDS
It's easy for Norah Jones to be happy, what with all the records and Grammys and lips around with world bearing her name. So crown Evelyn Finch the Norah Jones of nihilists, if you want. Hyperbole aside, she seems to be the antithesis of Jones's sunny disposition. Swirling piano notes and tight and tasteful rhythm work highlight Finch's reserved croon, until it turns to acid behind exploding reinforcements from behind. Frankenixon can be at once soft and crisp and caustic and brutal, all while maintaining poise and Finch's charmed pitch.

-Rob Macy



FREE MORAL AGENTS
EVERYBODY'S FAVORITE WEAPON
GOLD STANDARD LABORATORIES
Isaiah "Ikey" Owens is a keyboard player deluxe. He always has the killer tone. He has played in or with The Mars Volta, De Facto, Sublime, and Long Beach Dub Allstars. Now "Ikey" has gone solo, and outside of rapper J and vocalist Mendee Ichikawa Free Moral Agents, it's all "Ikey". EVERYBODY'S FAVORITE WEAPON is poetic and psychedelic and pensive and flows like a cell-based dream with non-stop ideas. The title track sounds like Stevie Wonder playing Air. There are several Air moments that swirl softly in a kind of tranced-out soul music. "Talk Show Host" is a playful funky song where upon J raps it super cool with lots of warmth and excellent rhymes. EVERYBODY'S FAVORITE WEAPON is a perfect record that covers a wide variety of music with artistic ease. "Ikey" is choosing not to play it safe, and as a result, EVERYBODY'S FAVORITE WEAPON is a masterwork.

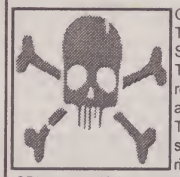
-H. Barry Zimmerman

FROM FIRST TO LAST
DEAR DIARY, MY TEEN ANGST HAS A BODYCOUNT
EPITAPH RECORDS
Referencing teen angst in an album title isn't exactly a call for respect, but that honesty carries the entire album. Smart, sarcastic, and genuine lyrics make DEAR DIARY endearing beyond all the musical mania. From First to Last can't seem to decide what strain of punk rock they'd like to play. They run the gamut and include everything from pop-punk to hardcore, hand claps to rapping, but it is the absolute sincerity and enthusiasm that keeps their effort from being a confounding mess. In spite of those odd missteps and painfully inane lyrics ("Your words are deadly weapons killing me"), I was a fan by the end. How can you not love an album with a track titled "I Liked You Better Before You Were Naked on the Internet"?

-Erika Owens

FUCK
THOSE ARE NOT MY BONGOS'
FUTURE FARMER
It's hard not to appreciate the four gutsy gentleman that make up Oakland's Fuck. Even more shocking than their name however might be the fact that their wistful, lo-fi aesthetic is so easy on the ears. While one could only wonder where they'd be if they could actually advertise for themselves (I weep for their doomed publicist), their woeful ditties would fit nicely in-between anyone's Pavement or Sufjan Stevens records. Recommended.

-Matt Siblo



GEORGE JOSEPH
TIME IS RIGHT
SELF-RELEASED
This six-song EP from George Joseph is a bluesy, guitar-oriented slice of rock and roll. With no label, no Website, and no info on the artist available, this review (as most probably should) is focused on the music only. The CD consists of five original tunes and one cover, all dominated by soft vocals interspersed with some fairly talented and traditional guitar riffs. Josephif indeed he is the guitarist pictured on the cover of this CDlayers multiple vocal tracks of humming, whistling, and soft chorus behind his quiet vocals. This is the type of CD that was probably done solo in a home studio but sounds good enough to have been done professionally. The manic version of The Doors' "Love Her Madly" which closes the disc is a fairly inspired version, with yelps, howls, and bongos backing some very fast-paced guitar. This is a pretty good disc. Perhaps next time we'll find out who George Joseph really is.

-DUG

GONE WITHOUT TRACE
GONE WITHOUT TRACE
THORP RECORDS
Well, it's heavy, angry, and sounds better loud. This album reminds me of what would happen if Propain, Fear Factory, and Biohazard listened to a lot of screaming hardcore before establishing their sounds. This band is vicious and intense, but they can easily be confused with many bands already out there. That being said, the bands that they would be confused with have unloaded many records and sold out many a sweaty venue. People wear their T-shirts and will remember them when they die. Gone Without Trace is better than just another spawn of an established scene, but there isn't anything here we haven't heard before. They even have a war theme intro to the album.

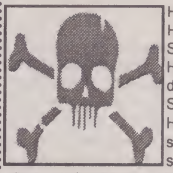
-Thomas Murray

GORGE TRIO
OPEN MOUTH, O WIST
SKIN GRAFT RECORDS
At their best, Gorge Trio upholds the same sort of avant-brilliance that follows in the tradition of other like-minded bands such as Hella and Don Caballero. At their worst however, OPEN MOUTH, O WIST is a 22 song crap shoot that serves up more than its fair share of misdirected noodeling and experimental excesses. While the trio are certainly not the worst of their breed, they'll never be confused for the most memorable either.

-Matt Siblo

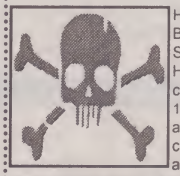
GUN CRAZY
DROPPING LIKE FLIES
MORTVILLE RECORDS
Jimmy Sanchez leads Gun Crazy in a rocking piece of garage excellence. Raw and tough guitar tones and driving rhythms are the basic blueprint for DROPPING LIKE FLIES, Gun Crazy's debut disc, a great example of how it's done with balls. The prize in the rock candy is the voice and attitude of Jimmy Sanchez. He is a little Iggy, a little Cheetah Chrome. Lead guitarist Clint Shay is doing Johnny Thunders' job, playing it cool with more aggression than Johnny. For my money, track 3, "Talk to Jane", is the hit single. DROPPING LIKE FLIES is an excellent, fun rock disc. Gun Crazy could be the next band in line behind Jet for newest garage sensation. That's cool with me.

-H. Barry Zimmerman



HEARTLESS BASTARDS
HEARTLESS BASTARDS
SELF-RELEASED
Heartless Bastards came together based on the strength of this five-song demo. This demo was written by Erika Wennerstrom, formerly of the band Shesus. She also played the majority of the instruments on the demo. Heartless Bastards have a heavy, muddled guitar sound, and Erika's voice sounds very similar to Joan Jett, which is pretty cool. Since this is only a five-song demo, I'm sort of left wanting more. Hopefully they have a full-length album coming out soon. Heartless Bastards are from Dayton, Ohio. Check them out if you get a chance.

-chad

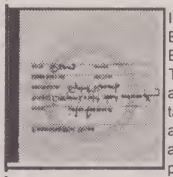


HELLBILLYS
BLOOD TRILOGY VOL. II
SPLIT 7 RECORDS
Hellbillys are supposedly considered America's first and best psychobilly act. They've been playing in the San Francisco Bay area since 1989. Their lyrics are like cartoonish grim reaper and death references and stuff. I just find it kind of boring. I'm not the biggest fan of psychobilly, but death metal and psychobilly fans should appreciate this album. Plus, I'm assuming it's part II of their trilogy, so if you want to get the whole trilogy, then you'll need this album, I think. Otherwise, you'll know the beginning and you'll know how it ends, but you won't know what happens in between without this!

-chad

HOWARDS ALIAS
THE ANSWER IS NEVER
HOUSEHOLD NAME
Quite how you can name Norah Jones, Tool, and Weezer as being influential on your band when high-energy ska-punk is your thing is somewhat confusing, but what Howards Alias do they do well, even managing to incorporate strings on a couple of the tracksso maybe I am being a little harsh there. There are moments when the band strays from the usual ska-punk path, such as in the dynamically emotive "Underground" and "40 Winks"; and lyrically they cover topics such as non-violence and anti-elitism within the scene, proving that it's not all fun and games in the world of brass-fuelled punk. Although the vocals are a little disappointing, this is still a rich and varied melodic punk album for those who like their ska with a much darker edge. www.householdnamerecords.co.uk / www.howardsalias.co.uk

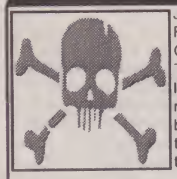
-Matthew Hocking



INTERFERENCE
EVERYONE'S RIGHT ABOUT EVERYTHING
EYEBALL RECORDS
This is a great fucking record. Here you have a band that possesses all the qualities I've been looking for in a great rock artist: A) don't take themselves too seriously, B) don't feel like the band must portray a dark or gothic image to be "hardcore," C) every other song isn't about some type of abuse- and/or drug-related death. The record is progressive melodic metal in the vein of what is popular right now, with some melodic punk thrown in. This is a feel-good record that will have you humming along in no time. Think of Interference as a more radio-friendly version of Poison the Well, but still cooler than Finch. Look out for this band in the future! www.interferencerock.com

-ADF

music that rocks is better than great sex.

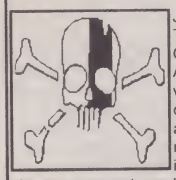


JEFF GEOFFRAY
FIRST BARBEQUE
OYSTER KISS MUSIC
To be perfectly honest, this album isn't bad at all, it's just so over-produced. It's like a cross between Dave Matthews Band and Peter Gabriel and kind of reminds me of something a dad would listen to. The songwriting effort is there, but I'm afraid the end result is just a little bit weak. I'm not sure that many of the people who read this magazine would be turned on by this album, but for those young Magellans out there, give it a whirl and see what comes up.

-Ringo

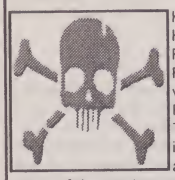
JOSIAH
VERONA
INDIE VISION MUSIC
Christian hardcore bands have always presented, for me anyway, an inherent contradiction. If you're supposedly praising the Lord, should you be doing it in a voice that so closely resembles one of a demons? Regardless, VERONA's Christian undertones are just about the only attribute worth mentioning as this sort of Shai Hulud / Most Precious Blood territory has become well covered musical ground. Don't get me wrong, I do appreciate the spirituality shown here but there's something about moshing for Jesus that just doesn't seem to fit. I somehow always got the impression that J.C. would be more of a passive, welcoming onlooker as opposed to an antagonistic tough guy with plugs in his ears, sporting a Hatebreed sweatshirt.

-Matt Siblo



JUDE THE OBSCURE
THE COLDEST WINTER
ONE DAY SAVIOR RECORDS
Although the album has key undertones that make the group sound very much like Poison the Well, Converge, and Hopesfall all rolled into one, these crazy metalhead Canucks have written a very dynamic album. Although Jude the Obscure ventures into already-charted territory, the group does so flawlessly through its dynamic style of melting together melody and raw, pounding metal. This is an album I can listen to over and over in my car right before I go murder my neighbors and their cat.

-ADF

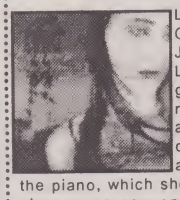


KAPLAN
HORS DE COMBAT
REDDER RECORDS
Four Hundred Years-style post-hardcore with sparse, barely intelligible vocals similar to those of Mogwai. Add a pinch of Codeseven's The Rescue and you've got a pretty fair summation of HORS DE COMBAT. The music never sounds copycatted, though, and is in many parts an interesting and refreshing blend of the aforementioned groups. There are too many cathartic moments to count, all placed seamlessly among some of the most powerful and intense music availableall of which is accomplished without being unnecessarily heavy. The album's fifth track, "Save Me, You Can't Save Me", features a multi-layered synth interlude so beautiful that there should be an emotion named after it. With the ability to create something of that nature coupled with their inevitable growth as a band (and perhaps the benefit of a better recording), Kaplan could very well become the kind of mass-admired, stalwart group used as the basis of such "band + band = band" reviews.

-Casey Clague

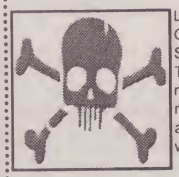
L.A. TOOL AND DIE
FASHION FOR THE EVILDOER
AAJ RECORD
Attention pretentious hacks: all of the classical training in the world won't save you from an abysmal lack of inspiration and vision. Too bad your bassoon instructor didn't have a thesaurus lying around at your overpriced lessons. At least then you might have a shot at a better vocabulary than a fourth-grader with a learning disability. Hacks.

-Casey Clague



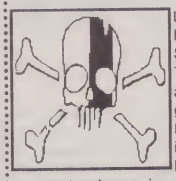
LENNON
CAREER SUICIDE
JOHN GALT ENTERTAINMENT, INC.
Lennon is a 20-year-old female singer who tours with rock groups like Alice Cooper, Heart, and The Cult. Lennon is a rock singer, but on this album she has lost the rock for the acoustic sound. The album consists of heartfelt songs that display her voice and versatility. All the songs on the album are comprised of Lennon's voice accompanied by the piano, which she has mastered, having played since the age of four. She plays some new and old songs and displays a different version and style to her songs.

-Jennifer Moncayo



LETTEROPENERS
GET UP THERE AND DO YOUR OOH'S
SELF-RELEASED
This demo by L.A. quartet Letter Openers is rock 'n' roll at its most typical. GET UP AND DO YOUR OOH'S lies in the exact median point between boring and compelling, between plain and memorable, and inspires no comment, negative or otherwise.

-Casey Clague



LITTLE WINGS
MAGIC WAND
SECRETLY CANADIAN
The sixth release from San Francisco artist Kyle Fields is another milestone in his long history of eclectic poetry, soft guitar, and unexpected musical endeavors. His last release, LIGHT GREEN LEAVES, was a three -part tour de force that included a CD, a cassette, and a vinyl record, all with slightly different takes on (mostly) the same songs. Though his current release is nowhere near as ambitious as the last, his signature Nick Drake-type vocals and quirky lyrical cadences are all here to be experienced in intimate detail. Numerous artists contribute bits and pieces on the different songs, but the overall effect is of a deeply committed artist opening his heart and bleeding across the tracks. This is definitely not rock 'n' roll for a new millennium, but rather a warning cry and a glimpse of a different path that Fields has chosen to traverse.

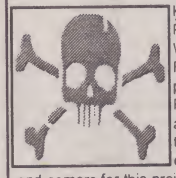
-DUG

wannabe reviewer: Jennifer Moncayo

DESCRIPTION OF HOW I EAT: like a human
WHAT I CAN DO WITH MY MOUTH: none of your business
I TRY TO ALWAYS:brush my teeth more than twice a day

KING RADIO
ARE YOU THE SICK PASSENGER?
SPIRITHOUSE RECORDS
Former Scud Mountain Boy Frank Padellaro has turned up as the brains behind King Radio and their delicately orchestrated pop shimmer. His barely-sung manner floats over chiming guitar flourishes, flickering bass lines, and chanting vocal undercurrents. Making the sandbox-crazy, childlike pop of Brian Wilson seems to suit the assumedly well-balanced Padellaro, especially when he adds his own oddball arrangements and horns plucked from Bacharach's orchestra pit. Brilliant pop that only occasionally comes off as the soundtrack to a merry-go-round in hell.

-Rob Macy



KISS OR KILL
PRESENTS LOS ANGELES CLASSICS/COMPILATION VOL. 1
WAR ROOM RECORDS
Forget Sum 41, Simple Plan, and any other of these bubblegum poseur punks. If you want to know what punk rock is, head down to the Red Room at Zen Sushi on Tuesday nights. Here you will find the up-and-rising Kiss or Kill scene. For a measly two-buck cover, you can join the weekly event where the beer flows like wine. Each week showcases five pop-punk/rock bands. Kiss or Kill has compiled 11 of their up-and-comers for this project. None of the acts on this disc sound alike or sound like any of the so-called punk rock plaguing the airwaves today. This compilation is not only a great treasure for the Kiss or Kill fans but will also get this scene heard farther than L.A.'s city limits.

-Brent Sheen

LKN
IN THE LEAP YEAR
GREY DAY PRODUCTIONS
LKN is Lauren K. Newman (Stellamane). Lauren is the mistress of noisy indie rock on this collection of songs. The tracks here, ranging from indie rock ("Will Meets Strength on Courage") to noise experiments ("Varientnoiz") are culled from two years of recording. Multi-instrumentalist Lauren plays drums, guitar, keys, bass, percussion, and more on the four-track creations. Not much of a singer (rather like a young girl trying to imitate classic Chrissie Hynde), LKN rocks out on these hard-hitting songs, and that is all that matters. www.greydayproductions.com

-Tom "Tearaway" Schulte

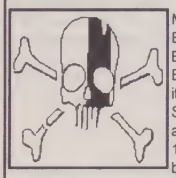
LOGH
THE CONTRACTOR AND THE ASSASSIN
BAD TASTE RECORDS
The newest release from dark and introspective Swedish rockers Logh is a five-song EP that combines two brilliant tracks from recent albums and three recent, unreleased filler tunes that probably should have stayed in the studio. The EP opens with the excellent "The Contractor and the Assassin" from the band's recent CD, THE RAGING SUN. The second track is the bit more obscure yet still superb "The Bones of Generations", which was taken from the 7" vinyl release of the same name. The remaining three songs on the EP are moody instrumentals that would benefit with some of Logh's biting vocal melodies. Bad Taste Records is a great label with some incredible (and mostly European) bands. The label should be more careful what it releases from some of its best talentsuch as Logh. www.badtasterecords.se

-DUG

you look like a dumbass with headphones on.

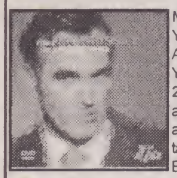
MARY TYLER WHORES
DEMO
Mary Tyler Whores are a side project of Joey Image of The Misfits. Their songs range from the street-punk style of A Global Threat (due to their backup vocals and fast-paced beats, such as in "Mary Tyler Whores") to fast-paced rock with Cypress Hill-sounding, quick rapping vocals (such as in "Machine Gun Hooker"). All of their songs are very fast-paced, loud, dark, and intense with anger. They also cover a Misfits song, "Horror Business", which fits their intense and fast style. From the sound of their songs, Mary Tyler Whores are angry guys.

-Jennifer Moncayo



MIDLAKE
BAMNAN AND SILVERCORK
BELLA UNION
BAMNAN AND SILVERCORK by Midlake is an emo record that relies on its kooky electro sounds to give it a sureal feel. It works for the most part. Songs like "Kingfish Pies" and "Balloon Maker" are all about flutes, chimes and fluffy percussion. Then "I Guess I'll Take Care" moves along like 1980s electronic pong, with random bleeps and blops that even harken back to Kraftwerk. Good for those trippy times, I suppose.

-Darren Ratner



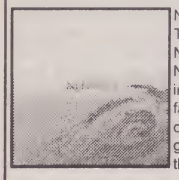
MORRISSEY
YOU ARE THE QUARRY
ATTACK/SANCTUARY
Yes, it's Morrissey. Yes, the man has been an iconic figure in rock for over 20 years. Yes, the Moz lays claim to one of the most distinct, emotive, theatrical voices, but this album is all right. Morrissey's signature wit, honesty, and melancholy abound, and there's some astute socio-political commentary featured (e.g., the light opener "America Is Not the World", "Irish Blood, English Heart"); but considering fans have waited seven years for another album from the poet, there isn't much that's changed, nor much that willin my mindstand the test of time. The album's absolute raison d'Œtre is the incredible, goosebump-inducing "How Can Anybody Possibly Know How I Feel?", a more upbeat, dark, and angst-ridden song. Why are all of Morrissey's finest compositions (including ones with The Smiths) those having questions as titles? Anyway, some other highlights are "I Like You" and the bittersweet "The World Is Full of Crashing Bores". However, other than these rare delights, not much going on.

-Janelle Jones

MY COUSIN KATE
SQUARE ONE EP
FOUR MILLIONTH KANGAROO
It's no surprise that My Cousin Kate are starting to generate a buzz in the U.K. underground, winning METAL HAMMER MAGAZINE's 2003 unsigned band competition and providing music for an advert for surf company Saltrock, as by the sounds of their latest EP they are without doubt heads and shoulders above 99% of the melodic rock wannabes currently on the club circuit. It's an infectious sound, mixing in strangely off-tune guitars in "Cold Light of Day" with Olly's highly distinguished vocal meandering, such melodies gliding with a consummate ease over their melodic rock base. Although they bear a remarkable resemblance to CLUMSY-era Our Lady Peace, they also demonstrate the kind of potential that should hopefully take them to the next level. www.mycousinkate.com

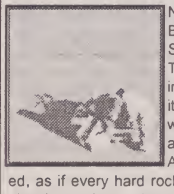
MY REVENGE
LESS PLOT MORE BLOOD
THORP RECORDS
Proudly hailing from the land of teddy bears, maple syrup, and, um, Phishi.e., Burlington, VTMy Revenge have set themselves on a crusade to restore hardcore to its coveted spot as the most reviled form of music on the planet. Loud, angry, rude, filthy, fucked, and crude, when singer Spencer Crispe sings "Listen up / You fucking listen to me" in "Stand for Something", you can tell he's singing as much to today's brand of arty hardcore bands (City of Caterpillar) as to his own skater peers. My Revenge has something to say about almost everything, from child abuse to racism to the purity of skate culture, and they say it all to a soundtrack worthy of the best Cro-Mags albums. Fans of Suicidal Tendencies will love them, as well.

-jck.



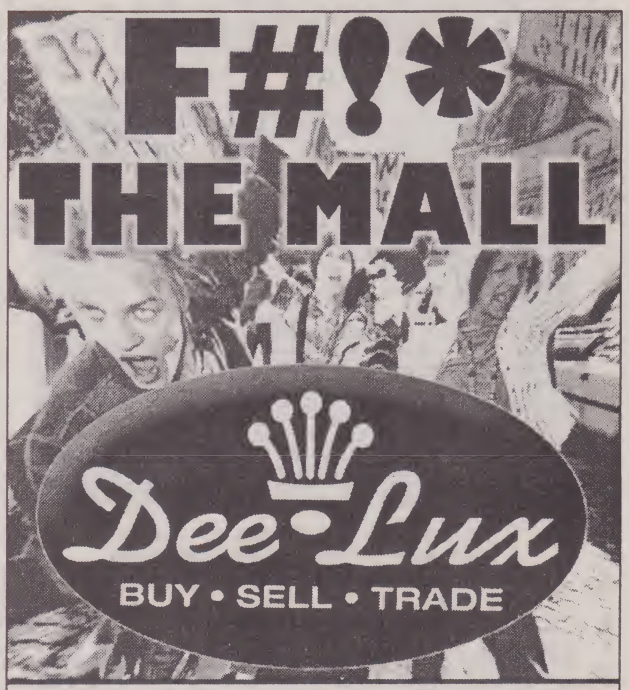
NEUROSIS
THE EYE OF EVERY STORM
NEUROT
Neurosis is a band that plays traditional thrash metal. This CD follows in the exact style of screaming that Neurosis traditionally plays, and fans of the band will be happy (as usual) with the results. I'd say the opening track is my favorite, because it really kicks the CD off and gets things going. Fans of Yattering and Dark Funeral should enjoy this one.

-Ringo



NEW BLIND NATIONALS
BURY THE PATTERN
SPARKLER RECORDS
The guys of NEW BLIND NATIONALS sound like a brash bunch, toting that line of rusty-nail punk edge and modern-day retro style. But it's as if it was decided a tune like "Tuned for No Wave" should stay within the cool paramters of today, with hard rhythms and screams, and not overdo it. That's the way most of BURY THE PATTERN runs. Alt-rock riffs abound and the group never takes the music for granted, as if every hard rocker was going to take it as it comes. There's a balance here that's pleasing to the eardrums.

-Darren Ratner



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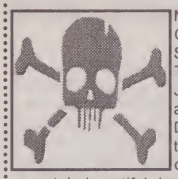
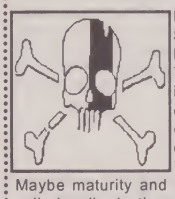


NICKI JAYNE
OF PIGEONS AND OTHER CURIOSITIES
SHAMAN RECORDS

The debut full-length from Philadelphia goth chanteuse Nicki Jayne is a stark, edgy work that teeters on the brink of madness and threatens to pull the listener into Jayne's dark, Marlene Dietrich fantasy. Though a full band is incorporated for many of the tracks, the arrangements are focused on either a solo guitar or piano, the instruments Jayne plays in her live shows. There is a certain beautiful danger to her throaty, cabaret voice that would have played well in post-WWII Berlin. Songs such as "Pigeon Named Crow", "Octopi", and "Disaster, You're Beautiful" are just far enough over the top to put her in a class by herself. Philadelphia's dark denizens have adopted Jayne into their scene as an opening act exclusively for goth bands. Jayne claims her twisted outlook can be traced back to a traumatic childhood trick-or-treating episode at Bruce Springsteen's house. Now, that's inspiration. www.nickijayne.com

-DUG



NONCENTS
SELF TITLED
NJB RECORDS

The four-song EP from this Glendale, AZ, quartet is a refreshing slice of pop-punk served up with sing-along choruses and catchy guitar riffs. While the band maintains a nice combination of Blink 182 and Green Day with its sound, the band has the distinction of possessing one of the most irritating Websites on Earth. Luckily, nobody in the band is old enough to drink. Maybe maturity and a better computer skills will come with the ability to kill brain cells legally. In the meantime, the band should work hard on a real demo or full-length CD so that they have something to sell on their Website other than T-shirts. www.noncentsrock.com

-DUG

NORTH SIDE KINGS
ORGANIZING OUR NEIGHBORHOOD
THORP RECORDS

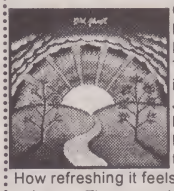
Memo to North Side Kings: swearing is not a necessity when producing hardcore. Wait, are they even hardcore? because they seem to be more in-your-face, against-the-whole-world-and-your-mom punk rock. During their first song, "In This Corner", there was youth-crew chanting of their name. Not exactly too deep or meaningful. The music itself is a little more than mediocre at times, when the drumming breaks out of its overly consistent beat. It seemed as if everything was tough, except for the musicand that's what really counts the most.

-Mabel Lam

NOT LONG AFTER
TOMORROW COME SAVE US
NEW SCHOOL RECORDS

What do we have here? Some pop-punk that doesn't sound redone, regurgitated, refurbished, and retarded? These guys have a clever sound that reaches back to 1980s synthesizers and slick 1950s crooners sipping strait booze on the rocks, calling women "dames," and wearing tuxedos. The lyrics are intriguing at times. They even stray away from the standard themes of today that include "I miss my ex," "I need another," and "Why won't that girl talk to me?" TOMORROW COME SAVE US is only five songs from Not Long After, but I was left with the distinct impression that I would hear about these guys again...whether I liked it or not.

-Thomas Murray



OLD GHOST
LIGHT RETURNS
MORPHIUS RECORDS

This full-length release from the Seattle-based quartet Old Ghost is a brilliant piece of alt-country in the vein of Cracker and The Jayhawks. With deliberate pacing and exceptional skill, the band brings in a bevy of guest musicians on violins, trombones, and banjos. The 10 tracks on this album are mostly slow, introspective tunes that plumb the heart and soul of the American experience. How refreshing it feels to find a band that makes every song a window to an alternative universe. These are the type of tunes that echo through your subconscious, connecting on a level that most bands never even approach. Think of Jackson Browne at his best (FOR EVERYMAN, LATE FOR THE SKY), and you'll have a pretty good idea of how poignant this album sounds. www.oldghostmusic.com

-DUG

OTEP
HOUSE OF SECRETS
CAPITOL

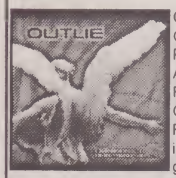
Otep is a heavy metal band that has been around a while and certainly held their own in the metal scene. Their latest effort, however, is 12 tracks of pure slop. The songs seem to melt together like ice cream on a hot day, and the result is a warm soup that no one wants to eat. Otep seem to have forgotten that they need to create new songs that don't sound exactly like everything they've done to keep their fans entertained. Alas, there's not much else to say about this collection of boring material.

-Ringo

when a cd is great, i get all giggly gay.

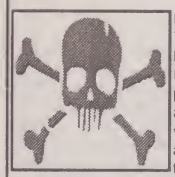
OVAL-TEEN
YORKVILLE, IL
BI-FI
Gawd damn, this sucks! A double-CD of basement records from indie popsters Oval-Teen. As if one 26-song disc of mopey, boring indie rock recorded on a four-track wasn't enough, we get a second, 28-song disc with even more of the sameearly cassette releases, demos, unreleased songs. But any way you slice it, it still smells like the moldy piece of pie that's been hiding in the back of the fridge since last summer. This is just really dull music without any redeeming qualities. Hey, it would make a great torture device for metalcore kids. Prop their ears open with toothpicks and pump this hippy dippy shit in through strapped-on headphones. AAAAAAHHHHHH!!! www.bifirecords.com

-Jason Schreurs



OUTLIE
COMPANIONS TO DEVILS AND SAINTS
PORTERHOUSE RECORDS
After some time adrift, Luke Pabich and Sean Sellers of Good Riddance fame are reunited in this delectable new project. Although Outlie does not have the same lightning-fast tempo as early Good Riddance, the raw power and emotion that made us love GR is here in all it's glory! The only quarrel I have with this disc is that Outlie has gone to producer Ryan Greene for the mixing of this project. Now, some may say Greene has the Midas touch, turning everything he gets his hands on into gold, but the only thing Greene accomplishes is making everything he touches sound the same. More specifically, the guitars on this album sound like any other recording Greene has mixed (see Lagwagon, Pulley, etc.). Do not! repeat: do notlet this stop you from listening to this album. Outlie has dished up a heavy dose of metal-infused punk rock, delivering consistent cathartic laced tunes that will propel this band to a household name.

-Brent Sheen



PATTERN IS MOVEMENT
THE (IM)POSSIBILITY OF LONGING
PATTERN IS MOVEMENT
Intricate but not inaccessible rhythms underlie the complex indie pop of Philadelphia's Pattern Is Movement. In the crowded stadium arena of sweet-sounding indie pop bands, this is the seat with a view to a more intriguing game of sophisticated songwriting. It is not all that post-modern, either, as parts of "Gunsmith" could be from the equally forward-looking band The Fall. It is just that Pattern Is Movement tries harder. www.PatternIsMovement.com

-Tom "Tearaway" Schulte

PEACHFUZZ
ABOUT A BIRD
DIONYSUS RECORDS
On this, their third album, Peachfuzz have stuck with their guns and released another power-pop gem. The sounds produced on this disc would not be out of place in the late '60s or '70s. Hell, even the CD's cover looks like an old LP from years past. Andrew Chojnacki leads the trio through 11 tracks of power-pop glory. The recording on this album is top-notch, with the classic guitar, bass, drum combo. However, the added psychedelic effects add a pleasant twist to the mix. This disc is meant for driving top-down along sunny beaches. Peachfuzz have produced a great-sounding disc with ABOUT A BIRD, but be forewarned: if you don't dig the power-pop sound that flooded American airwaves in the '60s and '70s, this is not the disc for you.

-Brent Sheen

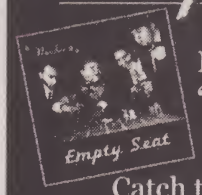
PETER SEARCY
COUCH SONGS
INITIAL
The multi-talented, versatile Peter Searcy returns after three years with another solo album, COUCH SONGS. A light, placid feel pervades the 11-song release, as the singer/songwriter's acoustic compositions are, quite simply, beautiful and affecting, making this the perfect album for anyone with a penchant for soft and moving music or for those who merely want to have an album they can throw on when that unexpected feeling of melancholy strikes. The songs are well-crafted, drenched in introspective lyrics enveloped in tender melodies. The understated "Gravity" is the standout trackat least for this reviewer. Though light and tranquil, there's an underlying darkness in there, and it concludes in a most intricate and compelling manner with three different vocal lines intertwined. Some songs (like "Invent") feature strings and piano (all played by Searcy, of course) along with the omnipresent acoustic guitar. Overall, a very pleasing record.

-Janelle Jones

PHOSPHORESCENT
THE WEIGHT OF FLIGHT
WARM RECORDS
Phosphorescent lead singer Matthew Houck can't help but sound like the Counting Crow's Adam Duritz on THE WEIGHT OF LIGHT. He's drainy and projects his voice like has the flu. But if you listen to the hypnotically moany "Toes out to Sea" or "All of it, All", it all comes across as alluring. This surprisingly good six-track record does more than that. Horns, clapping, organs and other random noises grace each track and give THE WEIGHT OF LIGHT its own charm. The standout track is "When We Fall", with enough entertaining piano, horns and overall bounce to make it feel like a late-night saloon. Sweet.

-Darren Ratner

Empty Seat



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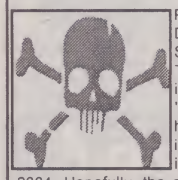
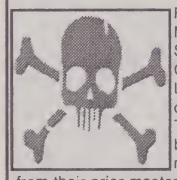
PIDGEON
FROM THE GUTTER WITH LOVE
ABSOLUTELY KOSHER RECORDS
The childlike chirp Val Iwamasa layered sloppily over the unbalanced noise pop of her backing mates creates a charming effect. Co-guitarist/singer Micah Foley chimes in on odd notes and slower paces, furthering the effect until the songs climax in a violent rush of urgent racket. Iwamasa's hypnotic voice cuts the mood of the first half like razor blades. Often those songs fail to stand alone from one another, becoming predictably progressive until the final burst and silence. However, the second half reads a little less like cut-and-paste symphonies, focusing on brutal pop with unhinged metallic traces.

-Rob Macy



PINCHE HUEROS
DEMO
SELF-RELEASED
This two-song demo from rocking surf-ska quartet Pinche Hueros is a spicy introduction to a band that brings the party back to rock 'n' roll. With a blistering lead guitar and a logo of a voluptuous redhead (naked save for some thigh-high black stockings), this band is all about loose West Coast fun. Currently the band is working on its debut full-length release, which should be ready for summer of 2004. Hopefully, the entire album is as upbeat and entertaining as the two rollicking songs on this EP. The band does have a Website dominated by a large color photo of a beautiful topless girl that contains some free music downloads. At this point, the band has more merchandise, shirts, thongs, etc., than music. It's time to hit the studio, boys. www.pinchehueros.com

-DUG

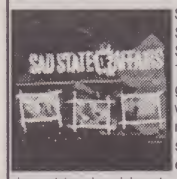


RILO KILEY
MORE ADVENTUROUS
SADDLE CREEK
California's favorite deserters have returned with a glistening new LP, and regardless of how you decide to interpret it, one fact is clear: MORE ADVENTUROUS is no THE EXECUTION OF ALL THINGS. Here, this L.A.-by-way-of-Omaha indie-pop quintet (the band now considers Mike Mogis of engineering and Bright Eyes notoriety its fifth member) moves in a direction decidedly different from their prior masterwork, offering a collection that veers clear of lap steel guitar and slicks the studio polish on thick. Jenny Lewis's endearing vocals sound better here than ever, and the presence of leading-man Blake Sennettwho has been keeping busy as of late with The Electedis felt much more briefly. The cohesiveness of THE EXECUTION OF ALL THINGS is scrapped, for the most part, allowing individual songs to exist free of strings. But all of these tracks ("I Never" and "Portions For Foxes" in particular) are prime candidates to argue that albums with unwavering harmonic themes may be more overrated than we'd like to believe.

-Dave Kargol

RHYTHM OF BLACK LINES
HUMAN HAND, ANIMAL BAND
GOLD STANDARD LABORATORIES
This Austin band employed composer/arranger Peter Stopchinski and string players Sarah Nelson and Leigh Mahoney (Tosca String Quartet, David Byrne), but it all seems too much. Rather than hip orch pop or sophisticated and arty music, the result is a heavy-handed imitation of The Smiths. The lyrics are just as impenetrable, and in putting so much into the message and its vehicle, Rhythm of Black Lines too often looses the melody and the magic of good indie pop.

-Tom "Tearaway" Schulte

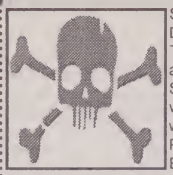


SAD STATE OF AFFAIRS
S/T EP
SPOOK CITY RECORDS
The Blues Brothers were more influential than most people give them credit for. Their legendary "mission from God" quip was a golden marketing tool, and nowadays every band with a mic stand claims to be on some sort of "mission" to bring something to the world. Along with several other mildly interesting bands, New Jersey's SSOA carries the burden of bringing old-school hardcore back to the forefront of modern rock. As a result, the obviously talented musicians who make up SSOA limit themselves to mimicking Minor Threat, but their Slint influence isn't hard to detect. They're hardcore in spirit and post-rock in thoughtalthough there's enough denial of the latter to fill a new Richard Gere movie. Admit it, boys: a band that sings lyrics like "Hold my hand through this mess" is not old-school hardcore.

-jck.

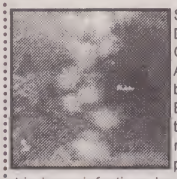
SAFETY IN NUMBERS
IN THE KEY OF D
TRIPLE CROWN RECORDS
With Hot Rod Circuit's Andy Jackson fronting and Get-Up Kid Ryan Pope on drums and Chris Flannery on guitar, there is little doubt that S.I.N.'s second effort would be a focused one. While the cast does rotate for live events, Jackson and his Social D affinity do not (maybe that's the "D" in question). They learn towards Ness's punk tradition. However, the added elements of post-hardcore guitar and melodic rhythm work propel the songs in a more modern indie approach.

-Rob Macy



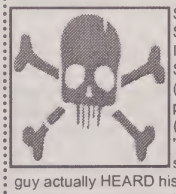
SCARLET FEVER
DEAD MAN'S DOLL
To quote the quite personalized, handwritten "press release" that accompanied this six-song debut EP from the motley four-piece Scarlet Fever: "[We're] pissed off no one likes us so you probably won't either." Well, guys, I gotta tell ya, I'm digging this lo-fi punk noise with shouted, somewhat high-pitched, slightly off-key vocals la The Peechees (especially on the rock 'n' roll-drenched opener "Watch You Bleed". Check out those whiney "ows!" Excellent!). This is fun stuff, kind of like a more amateurish Criminals. "Pirate", a sardonic look at the life of rock stars, is the real highlight here. A welcome dark, mid-tempo composition (akin to D.I.'s eerier pieces like "Venus De Milo" or "Richard Hung Himself"), it takes on a quicker pace during the chorus, happily reverting to its ghoulish previous pace thereafter. One qualm, though: at under nine minutes, this disc goes by WAY too fast. I wish this were a full-length.

-Janelle Jones



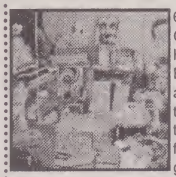
SILENT FRONT
DELETE EP
GENIN
At last! FINALLY, a release proper from these spiky post-hardcore brats. These Kingston boys have been familiar faces on the South East underground circuit over the past year, and this EP only clarifies their reputation as one of the scene's finest new bands. And make no mistake: this is explosive stuff. It's as if main songwriter Phil has planted a bomb in the centre of the DC post-hardcore mould and, with his huge infectious laugh, set it alight, revelling in the chaos as they ricochet off twisted shards of Faraquet and red-hot Bluetip shrapnel. What's created is a tempestuous, heart-achingly passionate sound that is very much their own and absolutely rocks in the live environment. Go seek. www.silentfront.co.uk

-Matthew Hocking



SIX7
SIX7
INDEPENDENTLY RELEASED
Sometimes I wonder why people such as SIX7's Pat FitzGerald (that's actually how the dude spells his name) even bother sending promo albums to magazines for review. This, in the case of SIX7 (whose logo cleverly incorporates the number seven into the "X" in "six"), is not unlike smearing obscenities on a resume in shit and sending it in to your desired workplace. It makes me wonder: has this guy actually HEARD his music? This record kicks things off by pissing into your ear via "Me", an ultra-cheesy acoustic Caucasian-rap jam (wow, five adjectives) that is more embarrassing to listen to than those videos of your drunken birdcage humping sessions are to watch. "Hey Baby", through some unfathomably potent miracle, manages to sound like a significantly more retarded rendition of Crash Test Dummies. This record is funny in that Gallagher sort of wayi.e., about as funny as a Tec-9 in your bloody eyeball.

-Dave Kargol



63 CRAYONS
GOOD PEOPLE
HAPPY HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO ME RECORDS
Balancing themselves on the already blurry line between Kindercore and Elephant 6, 63 Crayons bring their Undertones flavored pop to the public with their first full-length release GOOD PEOPLE. With their Farfisa organs, Theremins, and Bop Bop Ba s their arsenal is fully equipped and ready to compete with the best of today s next generation psychedelic bands. The album is split into two phases (for what reason I was not able to determine) of about a half dozon 2 minute pop songs each. At first the bouncy pop of Song for My Sister and Mrs. Brewster and the hokey, folky pop of Go Now April made Phase 1 my favorite but over time I began to warm up to the whole album. In Phase 2 the Stereolab charm of Mice and Feathers and the psychedelic schizophrenia of It s About Time begin to round a well balanced album.

-Wally Peters Jr.

SLOW JETS
REMAIN IN ETHER
MORPHIUS RECORDS
After listening to all 38 minutes, I could only describe such a bland, dragging experience to such other pleasurable activities as waiting in a long line or an operator putting you on hold for an hour. REMAIN IN ETHER could aptly be described as jangly indie rock that reminiscent to The Walkmen on welfare, or perhaps even Franz Ferdinand without a pulse.

-Matt Siblo

SLUMLORDS
S/T
PERFECT VICTIM RECORDS
The interesting fact about Slumlords is not that listening to their S/T debut immediately takes you back to the late 80 s NYHC scene ala Sick of It All but that singer Jeff Perlin actually spent time in that era fronting Breakdown, one of the slightly reclusive yet popular bands from that time. Musically Slumlords stay true to their roots by continuing to bash out aggressive hardcore in the same tradition as the 80 s hardcore scene that fostered them. However, lyrically the band sings about the everyday stuff that these blue collar 30 something s deal with on a regular basis. Drinking, walking the dog, and complaining about trust fund kids. While this is a far cry from the political agendas of the hardcore scenes of past, in the same way these guys stay true to their hardcore heritage they continue to sing about what s important to them. That s respectable.

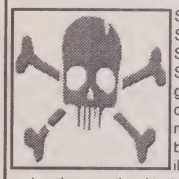
-Wally Peters Jr.

i want them to bring back the 8-track.

SOUTH BAY BESSIE
IT'S ABOUT TIME
ACUTEST RECORDS

South Bay Bessie (who pick their mail up in Flint, MI) is living and breathing the teenage life. The four of them look young. Are you young? If you hate the girlfriend you love and you hate math class, get signed up to hear the pain of heartbreak. The song titles are clever, and I applaud their use of parentheses on such song titles as "(I Never Really Liked) Purple Anyway", "I Made a Mistake (Please Stop Calling Me)", and "(Your) Kids (Are Gonna) Love It!". For the most part, IT'S ABOUT TIME is juvenile and immature in an honest way. South Bay Bessie made me remember how much I hated aspects of high school. The drama and the seniority, sweaty and stomping around wanting her to behave. She never does. This doesn't suck...if you're into it.

-H. Barry Zimmerman



SPECULUM
SIX-SONG DEMO
SELF-RELEASED

Six songs in three minutes and 34 seconds. Yes, this is grindor "gore-grind with a twist," as they deem their hellish (in a good way) noise on their Website. Tortured screaming; ferocious, break-neck drumming; no bass; shoddy production. When the guitars aren't fuzzy, buzzing, or scratchy, they're inaudible. I'm particularly fond of the devilish vocals on "hateful and homicidal". It's insane. All this is fine. My only grievance is with the lyrics, the horrid, horrid lyrics. I'm sorry, but to have any credibility, you need the music AND lyrics. There's no intelligence behind them, no substance. How long does it take to write lyrics for a song like the 31-second "your lame" (I won't even get into the grammar end of it), a composition consisting of merely "your lame and I don't fucking like you / yeah, I can't fucking stand you." Guys, guys, guys, some thought in the lyrics, please. www.angelfire.com/alt/speculum

-Janelle Jones

STEADY UPS
SOUL OF THE CITY
JUMP UP RECORDS

This sextet, which shares members with Pressure Point and Dynamos, is nominally a ska band. However, the group delivers original music in a rock-steady and early reggae, Jamaican ska way. This roots ska band thus has more in common with Desmond Dekker & the Aces, Israelites, and Skatalites than contemporary groups like Mighty Mighty Bosstones, Rancid, or Operation Ivy. They also set themselves apart by featuring male vocalist Ken Beasley on some tracks and Shannan Robertson on others. This adds variety and texture to the album. www.JumpUpRecords.com

-Tom "Tearaway" Schulte

STRUCTION
S/T
NOREASTER FAILED INDUSTRIES

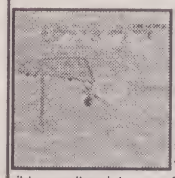
It takes chutzpah to make a record this frenetic and brash. Unfortunately for Struction, a sense of nerve isn't the sole basis on which a quality album is built. Meira Sonin's too-close-to-nu-metal-for-comfort vocals rarely stray from the melody of the guitarwhich at best takes prevalence from the vocals, and at worst shows an utter lack of creativity and musical awareness. Although the rhythms are propulsive and the vocals are at least loud (if not altogether horrific), the sudden onset of migraine is a clear indication that something is lacking. Struction isn't suffering from lack of heart or gritit's craftsmanship that's missing. With an absence of dynamic in these songs, the music is bludgeoning, leaving the listener feeling he has been aurally beaten. One can only hope that this abrasive record will leave some kind of callous over the ear, increasing immunity to bad music in the future.

-Casey Clague

STU WALKER
STU WALKER
ODD HALO RECORDINGS

This self-titled disc is a wild ride. Primarily anchored with old jazz samples and then layered with electronic frequencies, beeps, harsh keyboards, guitars, and chicks singing like the Lemon Sisters. There is occasional rapping. Mostly, you can't think, because Stu Walker has produced a modern masterpiece. The madness and the inventiveness and the ideas...I was floored. The lyrical content is disturbingly obsessed with crime, mainly murder. But the words from syllable to syllable are so well written. "Theft Arsen Vice Murder and Death" begins: "Love Dust and tumbleweed friends / Cranium plateaus of born against / Religious Right and I'm always wrong / Drink your wine and remember this song." If you have the slightest interest in avant garde or experimental music, STU WALKER is a must get.

-H. Barry Zimmerman



SUMMER AT SHATTER CREEK
SINK OR SWIM
REDDER RECORDS

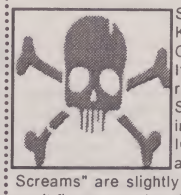
The third release from pianist Craig Gurwich is a solitary excursion into ethereal vocals and spacey mood pieces. The five songs on this EP sound as if they were recorded at a Gregorian monastery devoted to Elton John. Gurwich's lone piano leads a tortured path through these slow tunes, as an otherworldly back-up chorus moans and groans as a foundation for his high-pitched lead vocals. His mother did do an incredible needlepoint cover for the album, a veritable folk-art masterpiece in and of itself. Though Gurwich is a talented songwriter and performer, this type of musical introspection leads to commercial suicide. On the other hand, some musicians write music for themselves and tell the world to go hang. Sometimes commercial suicide can be beautiful. www.redderrecords.com

-DUG

SUNDAY MORNING EINSTEINS
KANGNAVE
PRANK

From the Swedish psychos who brought you Wolf Brigade and Svart Sno comes Sunday Morning Einsteins. KANGNAVE is a fantastic thrill-ride of 1000-mph, raw hardcore. With little to no breathing room amongst these 14 maniacal songs, it's hard to get a breath in edgewise. Enjoy the ride, though, 'cause this band not only annihilate, they also put an ear-to-ear smile on every face within spitting distance with their caustic humor and what I can only guess are weird, beer-swilling Swedish in-jokes. Call it Entombed on hyper-drive, or just call it some really awesome hardcorebut don't call these guys late for the beer bong. www.prankrecords.com

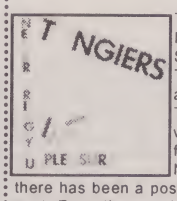
-Jason Schreurs



SURAN SONG IN STAG
KITTY IGLOO & THE PLASTIC STEREO
CRUEL MUSIC RECORDS

It's something a little art rock and emo. It's something that reminds me of Sleater-Kinney or Sonic Youth. But unlike Sleater-Kinney or Sonic Youth, it's something I won't be listening to again. Suran Song in Stag has created a record, KITTY IGLOO & THE PLASTIC STEREO, that's not bad in its delivery and overall atmosphere. Tracks like "Do You Sing" and "T.V. Screams" are slightly pushy and keep reminding me of the whole riot grrl thing. I can't figure out what the songs are about, though, and maybe that's the idea. KITTY ultimately ends up as slightly tedious and induces a case of that restless leg syndrome. For this critic, that's a no go.

-Darren Ratner



TANGIERS
NEVER BRING YOU PLEASURE
SONIC UNYON

The Tangiers have got it. They get it. They understand as much about Pavement and Guided By Voices as they do about Talking Heads and Wire. They know that indie rock and new wave is something much more than a fashion or a blueprint you follow. Unlike all the watered down imitations churning out of NYC every minute, The Tangiers really are. It. I don t think there has been a post punk band this creative since the term new wave was relevant. From the angular and dub sounds of Your Colour to the destined-to-be college radio smash hit of I Don t Love You this album rips.

-Wally Peters Jr.

TEN FOOT POLE
SUBLIMINABLE MESSAGES
GO-KART RECORDS

Orange County stalwarts Ten Foot Pole are back with their sixth full-length, their first on Go-Kart. With the addition of new members Mike Levy (bass) and Eric Cody (lead guitar), the band has infused the tried and true TFP sound with a new spark of energy. The guitars are thicker and the vocals raspierall thrown together in that breakneck pace that the punkers love so well. Their guitar-driven brand of new-school punk rock has varied only slightly over the yearsa lack of change that may have cost the band the attention of some listeners, but at least never disappointed their fans

-Casey Clague

THE ALMIGHTY TRIGGER HAPPY
I HATE US EVEN MORE
BAD TASTE

Perhaps the "Almighty" preceding "Trigger Happy" is a bit much, but these revered Canadian veterans do kick out the proverbial jams on this re-release of their 1999 album (then titled I HATE US). After a brief "mental healing hiatus," the guys are back, seeking "revenge," and touring, ready to bring us more of their fiery brand of (mostly) speedy punk (la Pennywise and NOFX (damn, Al Nolan's vocals are reminiscent of one Fat Mike!)). Some highlights include the powerful, simply awesome "Future Thanks", the mid-tempo, troubled-sounding "Burnt Coffee Blues", and the slower, groove-y "Plus or Minus 10%" (which is just a fine instrumental coupled with a long and winding rant from some guy who sounds like a drunken preacher). It does get irksome, however, as the diatribe persists (too) long after the wonderful music stops. And how about that rendition of "Gimme Some Action" by the almighty (yup!) FEAR?!

-Janelle Jones

THE AWKWARD ROMANCE
COVINGTON
DAY JOB RECORDS

The debut full-length release by this Covington, GA, quartet is a powerful, faith-affirming tribute to screamo garage bands everywhere. While the band prefers not to be labeled as emo, screamo, indie, or punk, inevitably the band's music falls into the burgeoning Christian screamo category. The band's heartfelt lyrics blare with tonsil-tearing intensity in off-key screams and raucous back-up choruses. With lyrics liberally sprinkled with references to Christ, God, and forgiveness and an invite to this year's Cornerstone Festival in Orlando, FL, this group has already firmly locked itself into a solid and energetic fan base. Creative songwriting and some hard, crunching guitars will take this young band a long way toward being signed by one of the major Christian labels.

-DUG

i wrote better lyrics in third grade.

THE BLACK LIPS
WE DID NOT KNOW THAT THE FOREST SPIRIT MADE THE FLOWERS GROW
BOMP!

Atlanta's The Black Lips sound like '60's garage rock meets the avant garde of earliest Sonic Youth and The Flaming Lips. The Black Lips is chaos and not for the middle-grounders among us. WE DID NOT KNOW THAT THE FOREST SPIRIT MADE THE FLOWERS GROW (the title is a clue) is a weird disc that rocks balls and is creative and interesting and is one of the coolest albums I've heard in a long time. "M.I.A." is a fuzzed-out, freak-out rocker from a David Lynch-style go-go bar. "Dawn of the Age of Tomorrow" is a Captain Beefheart-like blues from the cosmos of bizarre. My favorite song is "Stranger", which is a simple mod song with balls. It reminds me of Brian Jones-era Stones dipped in 100-proof weird. This is The Black Lips' sophomore effort, and a damn good one.

-H. Barry Zimmerman

THE BLACKOUTS
LIVING IN BLUE
LUCID

Opening track "something i can't say" assaults the listener with pure fuzzed-out fury, and the entire album continues on this rough, rocked-out road into the depths of electric intensity! With the recent garage-rock "revolution", The Blackouts manage to stay creative with a sound that is harder to pin down. They are far from blatant rip-offs of past chemistry, and they never proclaim themselves to be the reincarnation of past rock gods. Strong bass lines, guitar work, extremely catchy vocals, and creative energy give The Blackouts their voice. 'Nuff said. For more info, visit www.blackoutstheband.com.

-Norberto Gomez, Jr.

THE BRIEFS
SEX OBJECTS
BYO RECORDS

Once again The Briefs have put out a great record. Coming out of Seattle, The Briefs play a snotty, fun, energy-filled punk rock that infuses punk rock from the '70s, '80s, and '90s, all the way down to their dress. The band embodies everything that is right about punk rock, as they sing about politics and the U.S., their love affair with plastic "Sex Objects", and "Shoplifting at Macy's". Their music always contains a sense of humor, style, and individuality. This album is a little more toned-down, as the songs are more mellow and tranquil than their last album. However, the band still maintain the same consistency and edge that makes them so fun to listen to and watch.

-Jennifer Moncayo

THE DAMNWELLS
BASTARDS OF THE BEAT
EPIC

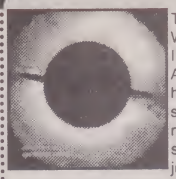
You know, I really think I should be a talent scout for a major record label, because every time I hear a band that makes my stomach turn and gives me a deep-rooted desire to stab a pencil into my eardrums, it turns out they're on a major label! So I think I can spot them. I have the gift. And that's the effect The Damnwells have on me. They're from Brooklyn. I don't really know how to describe how awful they sound, but here's an indication: they've been the opening act for Cheap Trick for the last two years. Not that I have anything against Cheap Trick (in their prime), but just imagine what kind of band would open for Cheap Trick now, and you get the idea.

-chad

THE ENVY CORPS
SOVIET REVOLUTION
BI-FI RECORDS

One of the most admirable accomplishments in all of music is when a band can make their debut album sound like they've been playing together for years. I would have never guessed that The Envy Corps was a brand new band that recently recorded their first disc. Their sound is of the indie-rock persuasion, with just a taste of Coldplay and Cinerama. The guitar tone is wonderfully clean, and the lyrics have a fantastically nostalgic feel. I'd say this band is well on their way to becoming a big part of the scene, as talent like this rarely goes unnoticed.

-Ringo



THE GOLDEN SOUNDS
WE ARE THE GOLDEN SOUNDS LP
INDEPENDENTLY RELEASED

Although this nine-song air-pop collection sparks off with the whining hum of a garage-sale keyboard (which sounds more like the result of someone's failure to pick up sufficient hours at KFC than a stab at retro-cool), it doesn't take a hell of a long time for things to start sounding significantly better. As more and more musical toys begin to jump into this mix and build delicate pop melodies with tender love, we begin to realize that the above mentioned Game Boy-inspired keys may appear here as a result of the band's desire to teach us a valuable lesson: everything deserves a fair chance. And I want The Golden Sounds to know that I, Dave Kargol, have taken their lesson to heart. So please don't be how I was, ready to drop to gavel before the 14-second mark. You're only robbing yourself, friend.

-Dave Kargol

THE GOSPEL IS A GRENADE
DETOX YOUR HEART IN CLOROX
SELF-RELEASED

One of my friends (who I will not name) would probably classify The Gospel as grind-noise-core-hard-Norwegian-Medieval-California-Surf-metal, and I would not take it too seriously. The Gospel is hard to peg, but I will just go with the feeling I get. The songs are short (barely a minute long), expressive, energetic balls of chaos that get achingly irritating, with their constant banshee yells. However, just as the chaos seems never-ending, BAM, suddenly there is a moment of clarity and form, which is sometimes accompanied by nice keyboard melodies. Then, just as fast, the chaos returns, the levee breaks once more. The demo begs the question of "being" and recognizing the "moment"and, as usual, those questions have the potential to annoy, anger, and leave many people behind...but The Gospel preach on. For more info, visit www.thegospel.tk.

-Norberto Gomez, Jr.

THE HANGMEN
LOTERIA
ACETATE RECORDS

The Hangmen sound hung over in a good way. Bryan Small, the mouthpiece of The Hangmen, has a wisdom that seems to come from an excessive lifestyle. He has that great weathered quality of a Kris Kristofferson. You can hear that Small understands the debilitation that doing hard drugs has on the psyche when he sings "She's a Drug". The Hangmen are doing roots rock with a cool slump and a sneer. Some of the highlight tunes include the dragging tired "Sleeping on the Floor" (which finds Small discussing the road and the usual accommodations), "I Just Wanna Feel Good" (which begins with a guitar lick reminiscent of the main lick in The Beatles' "Because"), and a really cool version of The Rolling Stones' "Citadel". LOTERIA is a testimony to hard living and the reality of debauchery as a learning tool and a rock liberator. A great disc to get wasted with. See you at the bar.

-H. Barry Zimmerman

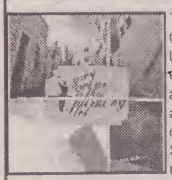
THE HORROR
FIRST BLOOD PARTS I AND II
COALITION/CHAINSAW SAFETY

Some ferocious, high-energy hardcore-thrash here courtesy of The Horror, who are without doubt the hottest hardcore supergroup in the North, with members of Voorhees and Imbalance in the ranks. With the CD version containing both the new 10" tracks and their debut on Chainsaw Safety, what results is nothing short of decimating as they rattle through 28 tracks in 25 minutes with as much energy, anger, and subtlety as a bulldozer demolition derby gate-crashing an annual village pro-hunting rally. Frontman Andy's vocals are thankfully a great improvement on his efforts in Imbalance, and his lyrics are no less venomous as he spits and froths his political polemics with a scathing satirical swipe. Awesome stuff. www.chainsawsafetyrecords.com

-Matthew Hocking

wannabe reviewer: Jasten

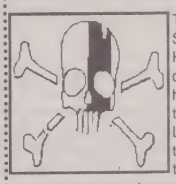
DESCRIPTION OF HOW I EAT: Marcobiotics...Madonna made me do it.
WHAT I CAN DO WITH MY MOUTH: I Make you and I better friends..
I TRY TO ALWAYS: Steal something good after every one night stand.



THE FRENETICS
GREY VEINS TO THE PARKING LOT
UNION 2112 RECORDS

On paper The Frenetics should be my new favorite band. They posses all the ingredients that make up a band that I usually flip over. Emotional and introspective lyrics, songs that range from punk to rock to folk, lots of loud and melodic guitars, it s not emo, and they are Canadian. Sounding like Samiam, Jawbreaker, and their Canadian contemporaries the Weakerthans, this is The Frenetics second full-length record. GREY VEINS TO THE PARKING LOT is a solid record filled with catchy tunes that traverse many different landscapes and that never sound formulaic or uncomfortably familiar. I do feel like there is still one more corner that the band needs to turn before releasing that record that truly defines them and brings them to the forefront. I can t put my finger on exactly what it is but in the meantime GREY VEINS is a welcome addition into my personal rotation.

-Wally Peters Jr.



THE LETTER OPENERS
SELF-TITLED

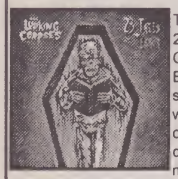
Kiss or Kill regulars The Letter Openers have brought forth a debut EP. Patrons of Zen Sushi on Tuesday nights will already have heard these boys and should definitely pick up this disc if they are fans of the band. For those who have not heard The Letter Openers (such as myself), I do not think that the songs on this EP truly represent the band. I am sure their live renditions of these tracks are much stronger. Five years ago this EP would have been an adequate debut release, but today's standards are so much higher. The recording on this record is fairly poor, as it sounds like it was recorded in a basement. This can give a certain appeal to a band, but like I said this just is not the sound this band is going for. In the meantime, check this EP out, and by all means get yourself over to Zen Sushi to hear these songs the way they were intended to be heard.

-Brent Sheen

when a cd is great, i get all giggly gay.

THE LIL' HOSPITAL
I WANNA BE WELL
FRIENDS
Indie, home-recorded pop. If you're not REALLY into indie pop, you might not like The Lil' Hospital; but if happy, indie-pop music is exactly what you're looking for, you'll appreciate every minute of I WANNA BE WELL. Inspired by Aisler's Set, Kevin Alvir sat down with a four-track, an electric guitar, and a cheap drum machine to fulfill his jolly pop ambitions. It's pop, and it's good (but it'd be 10 times better with real drums).

-Small



THE LURKING CORPSES
23 TALES OF TERROR
CREATURE FEATURE PRODUCTIONS
Boo! I scare you! Actually, this album isn't too frightening; it's more so a quasi-Misfits rip off but with an "edge." The vocals are very weak, and the songwriting is average, at best. I don't think fans of old-school punk would even enjoy these short anthems of gore and deceit, as they are poorly produced and boring. I would only recommend this album for extreme fans of horror and punk. www.thelurkingcorpses.net

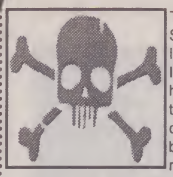
-Ringo

THE MARLBORO CHORUS
ENTANGLED
FUTURE APPLETREE RECORDS
This is extra-good, giddy-up indie pop with a bright, infectious beat. The group fine tunes the mod dial with a nod to such Britpop as The Kinks in the way it delivers one of the standout tracks, "The Moondial". In an era when the indie in-thing is wringing out high-volume sonic assaults from an emotional angst, this is cheery and refreshing like that first spring day when it's better to be outside the house than in. www.futureappletree.com

-Tom "Tearaway" Schulte

THE NATIONAL ACROBAT
THE COMPLETE RECORDINGS
INITIAL RECORDS
If there's one thing that I hate, it's when labels re-release old records of bands that never really made it and then claim that they're very influential in today's music scene. This is an example of a band that, for one reason or another, broke up while the bands the group opened for became successes. Sorry to break it to the guys in The National Acrobat, but you had your chance, and you blew it. The oldest material on this recording dates back to 1999, and even for the time frame, the music does not come off as being very groundbreaking. The music is chaotic yet progressive metal in the vein of groups such as Botch, Focal Point, and Phaedo. You're better off saving your 10 bucks for a recording of something that really matters, not some label's way of trying to make a quick buck off a band not a lot of kids cared about back then.

-ADF



THE PRESS FIRE!
SELF-TITLED
INDEPENDENT RELEASE
It's been a while since I've received a demo from a band that has really impressed me. Only having been formed in 2003, this group has forged a great sound that reminds me of a direct crossbreed between Fugazi and Modest Mouse. The band has mastered a spastic yet melodic approach to garage rock that really entertains the listener. If you've ever been looking for a more garage-sounding Weezer, then you might want to check out The Press Fire!.

-ADF

THE SOVIETTES
LP II
ADELINE RECORDS
What do you do after a successful debut album followed by numerous U.S. tours? Well, you head straight back to the studio and record another solid album. This is precisely what The Soviettes have done with LP II, their follow up to 2003's surprise hit LP I. Billy Joe (of Green Day fame) has found a real gem with The Soviettes, adding the female-fronted punk rockers to his label Adeline Records. Not only are they a fresh face to the scene, but they also are unlike any of their predecessors. Sure, they bare that classic pop-punk sound, delivering simple four-chord progressions backed by simple drumming, but the vocal prowess of these babes surpasses any other girl-fronted punk band. You see, when the girls sing on this disc, they do not sound like cats trapped in tin cans. Everyone sings in The Soviettes, but the girls shine the brightest when it comes to laying out melodies from the pipes. The tunes on LP II are simplistic, but they are fun and easy on the ears. Give it a listen and in no time your head will be bobbing harder than Monica Lewinsky's.

-Brent Sheen

THE STAND-INS
CLEAN SLATE
MEDIUM BUILD
When I first threw CLEAN SLATE into my player, I could have sworn I was listening to some band on Sub-Pop records circa the 1990s. The Stand-Ins definitely pay homage to this era of rock. Even the disc's layout is reminiscent of these yesteryear albums. The songs on the disc steadily rock their way to the finish, but the bass-heavy recording left it hard to listen to in one sitting. The muddy guitars drown out singer Andy Pope. Nonetheless, the vocals are enjoyable when they do make themselves heard. There was not a song on CLEAN SLATE that really stood out above the rest. However, with guitars crunchier than a teenage boy's underwear, The Stand-Ins have created a disc that is great for road trips and parties.

-Brent Sheen

wannabe reviewer: Tom Schulte

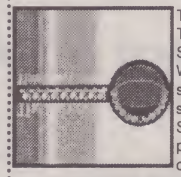
DESCRIPTION OF HOW I EAT: Like a good Trencherman.
WHAT I CAN DO WITH MY MOUTH: Masticate.
I TRY TO ALWAYS: Act first.

THE PAPER CHASE
GOD BLESS YOUR BLACK HEART
KILL ROCK STARS
"I want your head / I want your wicked parts / I want to wring out your evil thoughts / I want to eat out your bitter heart," said the spider to the fly, and that's exactly the vortex of desperation, anger, paranoia, obsession, depression, and deadly longing The Paper Chase suck you into when they GOD BLESS YOUR BLACK HEART. "Say pretty please cause God is listening / And we all fall in the big empty" of violent, abstract, insect-driven addiction, "And this sick song moves on if you're lucky lifelong you can sing a part / As it falls apart" in this Bright Eyes-quality recording. But this is a darker and far more musically adventurous madhouse. It is a vague, fluctuating concept album of existential proportions. It is true, desperate, earth-shattering, mind-numbing emotion that contains the truth, the heavyweight of confusion that Conor Oberst wishes he could convey in his narratives. With The Paper Chase, we are "Dying with Decent Music". Texans do everything bigger and better. For more info, visit www.thepaperchaseband.com.

-Norberto Gomez, Jr.

THE PEACOCKS
IT'S TIME FOR THE PEACOCKS
ASIAN MAN RECORDS
The Peacocks are from Zurich, Switzerland. They play rockabilly music. I'm not the biggest fan of rockabilly, but I like The Peacocks, for the most part. They have the energy and attitude of early '80s English punk bands. They're lyrics are pretty good and kind of funny. They're a fun band, and they rock.

-chad



THE SUBCONS
TIME HAS COME
SELF-RELEASED
While The Subcons may never come close to The Shins-like status, there may be hope for them yet. This saccharine-sweet indie nonsense would be perfect for in-store music at Sanrio (you know, the company that makes the Hello Kitty pencil toppers and the notebooks with penguins and shit all over them?). The music calls to mindwhether intentionally or notthose pastel colors and loveable cartoon animals, the sort of whimsical images that should be confined to the bedroom walls of pre-schoolers and wannabe-hip pre-teen girls. It's unnervingly light-hearted and giddy, and it comes off a little creepy. If it were offset by a bit of Dr. Hook-style innuendo, it might not seem as much so. At least the perversity would be deliberate, not just a by-product of their sugar-coated pop insensibilities.

-Casey Clague

THE TALK
IT'S LIKE MAGIC IN REVERSE
MORISEN RECORDS
What irks me most about pop-punk is the lack of depth. The Talk, on the other hand, can pull off being lighthearted and upbeat without a hitch. Their duo of guitars creates a full and rich sound that is electrified by light, perky melodies. This fast-paced rock 'n' roll nearly brings me back to the better days of Green Day, who supposedly are making a comeback. But while you're waiting around for that to happen, go ahead and see what all the talk is about The Talk.

-Mabel Lam

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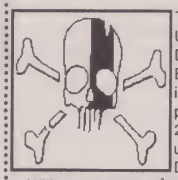
THE VOIDS
KILL A GENERATION
DR. STRANGE
Immediately upon putting this disc in, it was clear this was some sick shit. Turns out that this little gem came out a year ago on another label. With the looming possibility it would end up going the way of the buffalo (I'm assuming this is the reason), the good people at Dr. Strange took it upon themselves to re-release KILL A GENERATION for those who missed out the first time around. Unsurprisingly, this outfit will be (and are) likened to bands such as Vice Squad, The Avengers, and The Expelled, as they all are female-fronted. But the fact that The Voids are led by a female vocalist should be a non-issue. Of course, as females in punk is still somewhat of an anomaly, that's how bands featuring the fairer sex are marketed. Anyway, this is just some straight-up, enjoyable, fast-paced, urgent-sounding, slightly-snotty, political punk from beginning to end. HIGHLY recommended.

-Janelle Jones

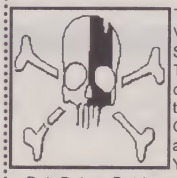


THISGIRL
UNO
DROWNED IN SOUND
Bouncing back with their sophomore album after far too much toing and froing from major-label A&R departments, thisGIRL are poised to deliver on all the promise that's been bubbling since their 2001 debut with this fresh new release on the similarly fresh and ultra cool new label from leading music Website DrownedInSound.com. Only, it doesn't quite hit the mark. Sorry. With huge, expensive-sounding production and a more polished songwriting approach, songs evidently appear slick enough for radio yet seem to eschew certain intricacies that made their previous recordings so captivating. It's still an enjoyable record and proves that there are few U.K. rock acts even close to their level of songwriting. Just maybe they shouldn't try too hard to broaden their target audience. www.thisgirl.co.uk / www.drownedinsound.com/recordings

-Matthew Hocking

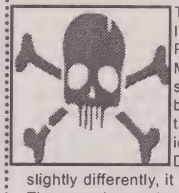
THIS ILLUSION
SELF TITLED
CASKET
A passable effort here from a U.K. quartet quite patently aiming straight for that fabled radio-friendly area of the heavy-rock spectrum. However, the only "illusion" this band are under appears to be the fact that this whole nu-rock "renaissance" is actually going to last until next year. "Eleven Thirty Nine", although brief, is the only track that really shows much light at the end of this turgid scrEMO tunnel, demonstrating an obvious desire to head down heavier pathways had they not been blinded by the gleaming belt buckles of Lostprophets. Despite Pitchshifter drummer Jason Bowld lending a hand (or should that be bum cheek) on the drumstool, much of this EP is nothing special at all, passing by with about as much groin-stirring excitement as watching pop troll Avril Lavigne learning to skate! www.thisillusion.com

-Matthew Hocking



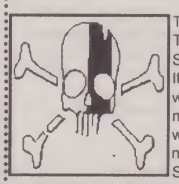
TOMMY STINSON
VILLAGE GORILLA HEAD
SANCTUARY
Tommy Stinson (if you remember your punk rock history) was one of the founding members of The Replacements: he was the 13-year-old bass player! Now he's the bass player for Guns N' Roses. And since Guns N' Roses isn't doing too much at the moment, he had time to write and record this album. You can clearly hear his influences, from Paul Westerberg to Bob Dylan. But he really isn't a Paul Westerberg or a Bob Dylan. This is a decent, mopey rock album, but there are better ones out there by better songwriters. This album is average, at best...but I still enjoy it, for what it's worth.

-chad



TRAGEDY ANDY
IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO START OVER
POP SMEAR RECORDS
Motivated by mall crowds and high school, Tragedy Ann dig the same dirt that Green Day brought into your parents' living room but Blink 182 fertilized instead. Rotating chorus duties and guitar work suggest a deeper affinity for Sum 41, with guitar mimicry from the entire scope of bands that band mimicked. Despite the words being about different girls and phrased slightly differently, it is all the same under-inspired stuff on a dozen other records. The tragedy may be that not one note hints any originality anywhere.

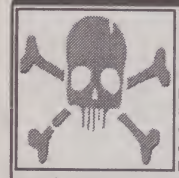
-Rob Macy



TWO IF BY SEA
TRANSLATIONS
SPEEDBUMP
It is no surprise if right off the bat this reminds one of another band who plays fierce electronic, bass-blasting, dance-crazy guitar melodies with angst-driven punk-rock disregard. The comparisons with Saddle Creek's own The Faint cannot be denied. Yet, the '80s new-wave vocals/guitar work that echoes both The Cure and The Smiths (for example, "escalator" and "swords or pistols") gives Two If by Sea a bit of room, separating themselves from the pack of recent electro-clash bands. Unlike The Faint, though, and like many other bands of the same style, TIBS have a hard time keeping the entire album interesting and creative. However, the tight musicianship, well-constructed songs, and catchy hooks make TRANSLATIONS a very engaging album. For more info, visit www.twoifbysea.org.

-Norberto Gomez, Jr.

close-minded people are morons.



VANDELAY INDUSTRIES
POSTCARDS FROM ALASKA
LADY OF THE NIGHT RECORDS

I presume Vandelay Industries got their name from a fictitious company created by one of the characters on the hit TV show SEINFELD, so one is forced to draw the comparison. This band is just an excuse to be part of a rock scene without actually having to put any effort into writing decent songs or being any good. They just sound like predictable indie rock, and they're not even as sad-sounding as other indie bands. It's just nonchalance and blah. This five-song EP is just boring. Vandelay Industries are from Las Vegas.

-chad

VARIOUS ARTISTS
BUY INDIE MUSIC COMPILATION VOL. 1
BLACK DOG PROMOTIONS/BUYINDIEMUSIC.COM

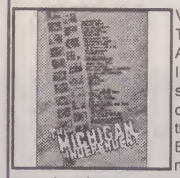
I've said it before and I'll say it again. I hate comps. So rarely are they worth the 15 cents of plastic that is used to make them. (Let alone the CO_2 used in the process. —see www.futureforests.com) BUY INDIE MUSIC COMPILATION VOL. 1 has the distinct honor of not only being a useless waste of plastic but it is also the worst comp I've ever had the unfortunate displeasure of listening to not to mention reviewing. If they are really trying to encourage music buyers to support independent artists they are doing a disservice to the community by releasing this pile of crap. I was almost compelled to run down to the local mall record store and buy the new Yellowcard or New Found Glory record.

-Wally Peters Jr.

VARIOUS ARTISTS
HEARTS BLEED PASSION VOL. 1
INDIE VISION MUSIC

This is only Indie Vision Music's fourth release, but they've already compiled quite a diverse lineup. Indie rock, acoustic, pop-punk, and hardcore pepper the tracks, but most of them have a common thread: screaming. I don't know when screaming replaced strong songwriting, but the vast majority of these bands employ it as a means of catharsis whether it fits with the style or not. In spite of this distracting element, there are some worthwhile tracks, especially "Roosevelt" by Linus and "Not Waving but Drowning" from Pennylane. Both of those tracks are straightforward, energetic pop-punk, entertaining, honest, and scream-free. This comprehensive look into Indie Vision Music also includes numerous unreleased tracks and a low price tag that make this intro worth looking into.

-Erika Owens



VARIOUS ARTISTS
THE MICHIGAN INDEPENDENT DVD
ACUTEST RECORDS

In-depth look at the goings-on of a flourishing punk/hardcore scene in Michigan...though by the looks of it, this 50-minute DVD could represent (to quote Reagan Youth) "Anytown," U.S.A., as this stuff is evident all over. With live footage of bands like Small Brown Bike, Charlevoix, and Capture the Flag, we experience the musical aspect while gaining a feel for the community behind the scene's existence, thanks to commentary from everyone involved in all facets of the "collective" that is the punk/hardcore scene: the artists, record label owners, photographers, screen printers, etc. Like the singer of Ettison Clio says, it's "a big web" where everybody needs everyone else in order to survive and thrive. Filmmaker Michelle Lukezic does a fine job proving this idea, as well as how important the D.I.Y. ethic is. Anyone who's ever been involved in his/her own hometown scene will surely appreciate this candid documentary.

-Janelle Jones

VARIOUS ARTISTS
FOR BEGINNERS

The best compilation I have ever heard, METAPHYSICS FOR BEGINNERS seamlessly combines indie folk, electronic instrumentals, and quality rock music from 18 bands I can honestly say I'd never heard. It's truly amazing how they manage to cover that range of music with so much original, impressive material. Here's the band list, so you can go out and buy all their CDs: Will and Robert Creeley, Detachment Kit, Kalpana Gloria Record, Snowglobe, Zykos, Sufjan Stevens, From Monument to Masses, Figurine, Saturday Looks Good to Me, The Ghost, Rockets and Bluelights (Close at Hand), Summer at Shatter Creek, Kind of Like Spitting, Make Believe, Satellite Grooves, Hockey Night, and Love of Everything. Seriously, anyone reading this magazine will love this album (unless you're into heavy metal).

-Small

VARIOUS ARTISTS
SECRET WEAPONS OF KUNG FU 2 (DVD)
KUNG FU RECORDS

Memo to managers at Kung Fu Records: next time, if you want your DVD reviewed positively, include the complete packaging, not just the fucking disc in a cheap jewel case. If you pull this cheapskate shit next time, I won't tell SKRATCH readers how great it is that SECRET WEAPONS presents live footage of The Adolescents, Reel Big Fish, and Goldfinger, how nice the Warped Tour '03 footage is (especially the Poison the Well song), and how aurally and visually pleasing bands like Tsunami Bomb, Audio Karate, and Ozma can be. Next time I'll trash it, regardless of how much I like it, I promise you.

-jck

VARIOUS ARTISTS
WARPED TOUR 2004
SIDE ONE DUMMY RECORDS

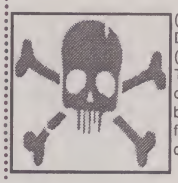
You don't have this yet? What's the matter with you? The Warped Tour is one of the most musically diverse and anticipated events of the summer, and you need to be ready before you go. This double-disc is your preview. By listening to this collection, you'll learn what bands you should avoid, as well as the ones you'll need you to trample your peers in order to see better. If you can't get to the show for some reason, this album makes somewhat of a substitutionkind of like how humping a hotel mattress is a substitute for a blindfolded, ecstasy-induced orgy with a foreign co-ed volleyball team.

-Thomas Murray

VIA AUDIO
EP
KILL.NORMAL. RECORDS

Six atmospheric, well-constructed pop ditties are presented in Via Audio's first EP. The wonderful minimalist guitar work has moments of pure David Gilmour-like genius. Creating powerful solos that seem effortless and sometimes heavenly, guitarist Tom Dies manages to stay grounded and returns to earth on every occasion (as in "mouth shut"). However, Via Audio is also no stranger to noisy, Sonic Youth chaos, such as the driving "if they find me", which ends in a haze of feedback fog and blip-blip-blips. Soon after that the pop beauty (in Postal Service/Stereolab fashion) of "our lies + your smile" showcases the angelic vocals of frontwoman Jessica Martins, only to be outdone immediately after on the moody, soulful, and lusciously rich "setup". The final haunting, depressing, electro track, "the perfect fix", is the perfect sad ending to this strong EP. For more info visit www.viaaudio.net.

-Norberto Gomez, Jr.



(WE ARE) VIPERS
DEMO

(We Are) Vipers formed in the winter of 2003 out of Orange County. They play a hard garage rock that is very catchy and fun. "Scandinavia or Bust" is quite the memorable song that you will be humming for hours because it is so good. The music is fresh, clean, and full of attitude and fun. This band claims to be the new resurgence of rock 'n' roll, and they claim they will die trying to save rock 'n' roll.

-Jennifer Moncayo

WAKING ASHLAND
I AM FOR YOU

In leaving this disc until the end of my reviews, I could hear my grade-three teacher's voice bellowing in my mind: "Never judge a book by its cover." At the bottom of my listening pile was this CD, a bare-bones press copy of I AM FOR YOU. My dimwittedness was in top form, as I thought a CD without a cover or liner notes could not be worth my time. In a matter of 30 seconds of listening, I was overthrown with surprise and was hooked on Waking Ashland's unprecedented sound. Waking Ashland cannot be simply thrown into any genre of music, but they have created goosebump-producing rock that will leave you breathless. A rich blend of guitars, bass, and drums are combined with the beauty of the piano to give Waking Ashland a sound unlike any band today. In the Captains chair of Waking Ashland is singer and piano player, Jonathan Jones. His crisp clean vocals, backed by the tinkling of ivory, fall nothing short of perfection. Waking Ashland can not be overlooked. Buy, burn, or steal I AM FOR YOU. I guarantee that the hair on the back of your neck will stand. I AM FOR YOU is easily the best record out so far this year.

-Brent Sheen

YETI
VOLUME OBLITERATION TRANSCENDENCE
LIFE IS ABUSE

Bleak and progressive sloth-metal recordssuch as this four-song LPtypically inspire dark weather analogies and generate gloomy buzz-terms within record reviews. And who the hell am I to throw a wrench into the system and not follow suit? Here, Yeti embarks into a dismal world of churning sounds and cold depths. Their approach to extreme art-metal is as eclectic as it is experimental, as patient and rumbling strings melt into glitching keys and occasional tortured howls. And when I say patient, I mean it: you'd be more likely to turn up a blast-beat or thrashing breakdown in a Nancy Sinatra record than here. Yeti's slow-building cacophony culminates far behind the blackened tree line, stalking you from all angles, yet never crashing down. Pick this one up in the minimalist post-jazz-metal section of your favorite record store.

-Dave Kargol

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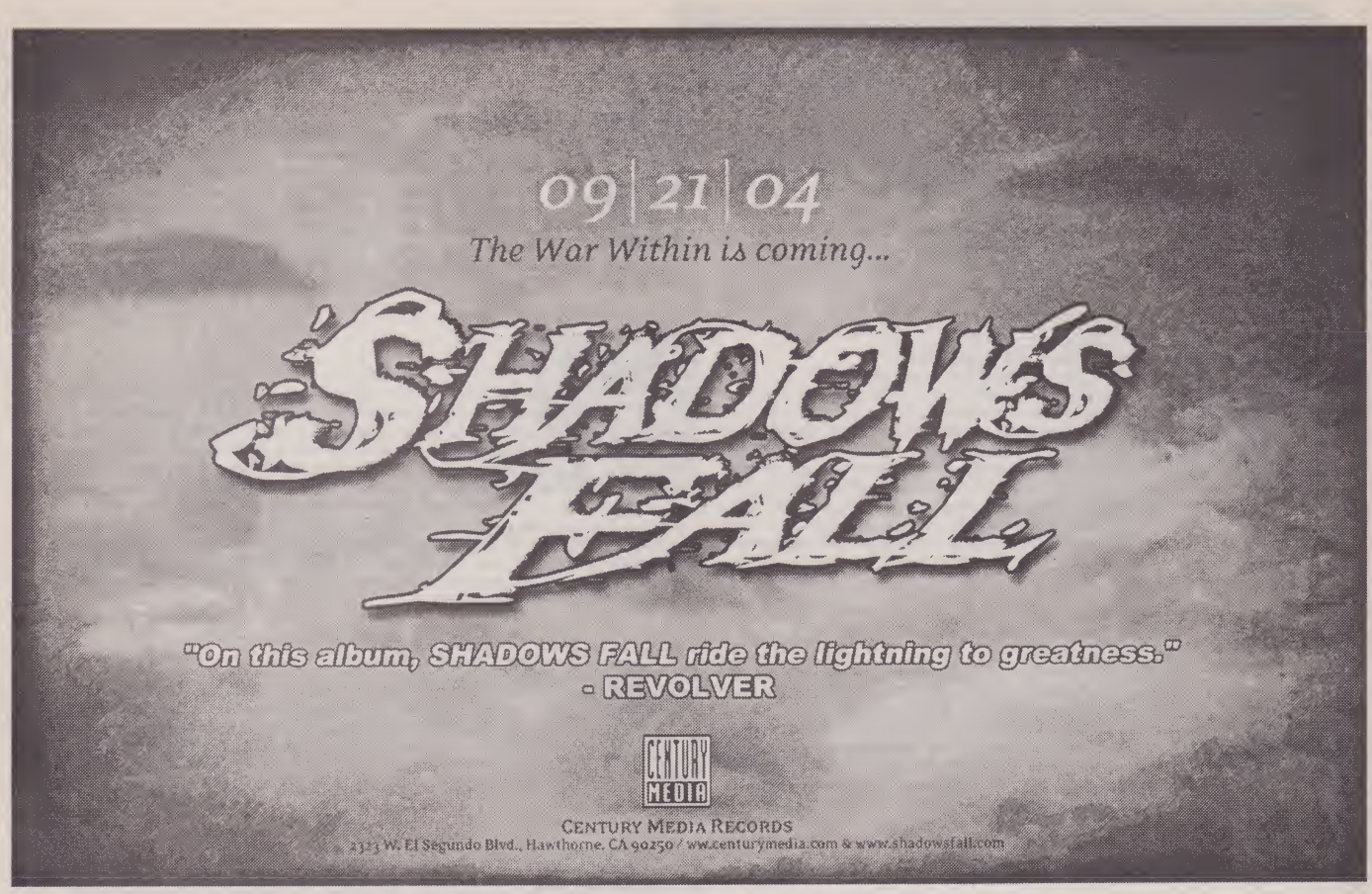
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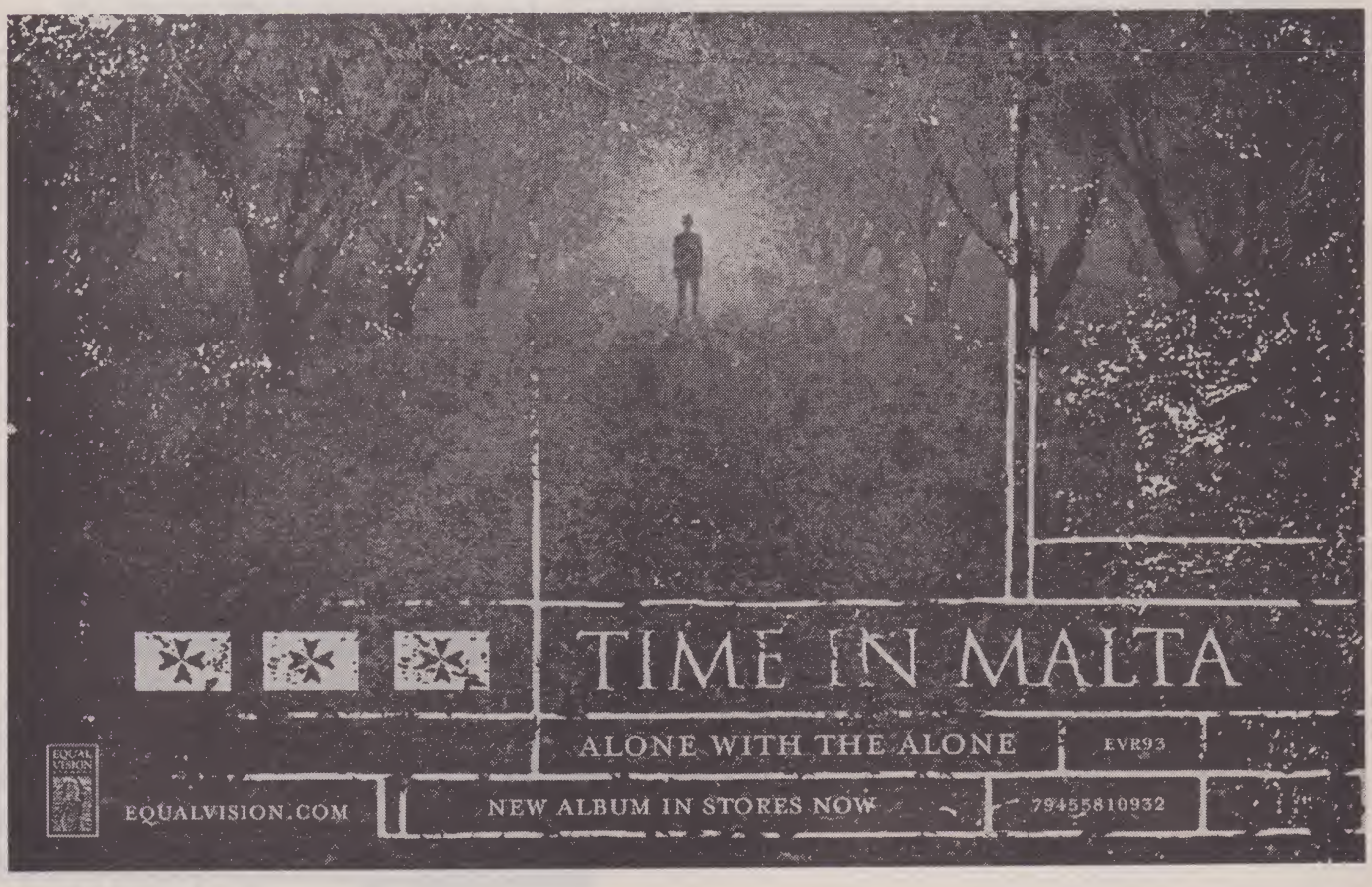
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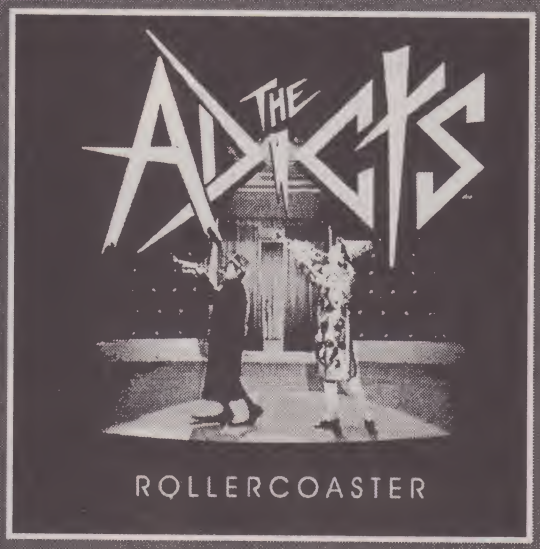

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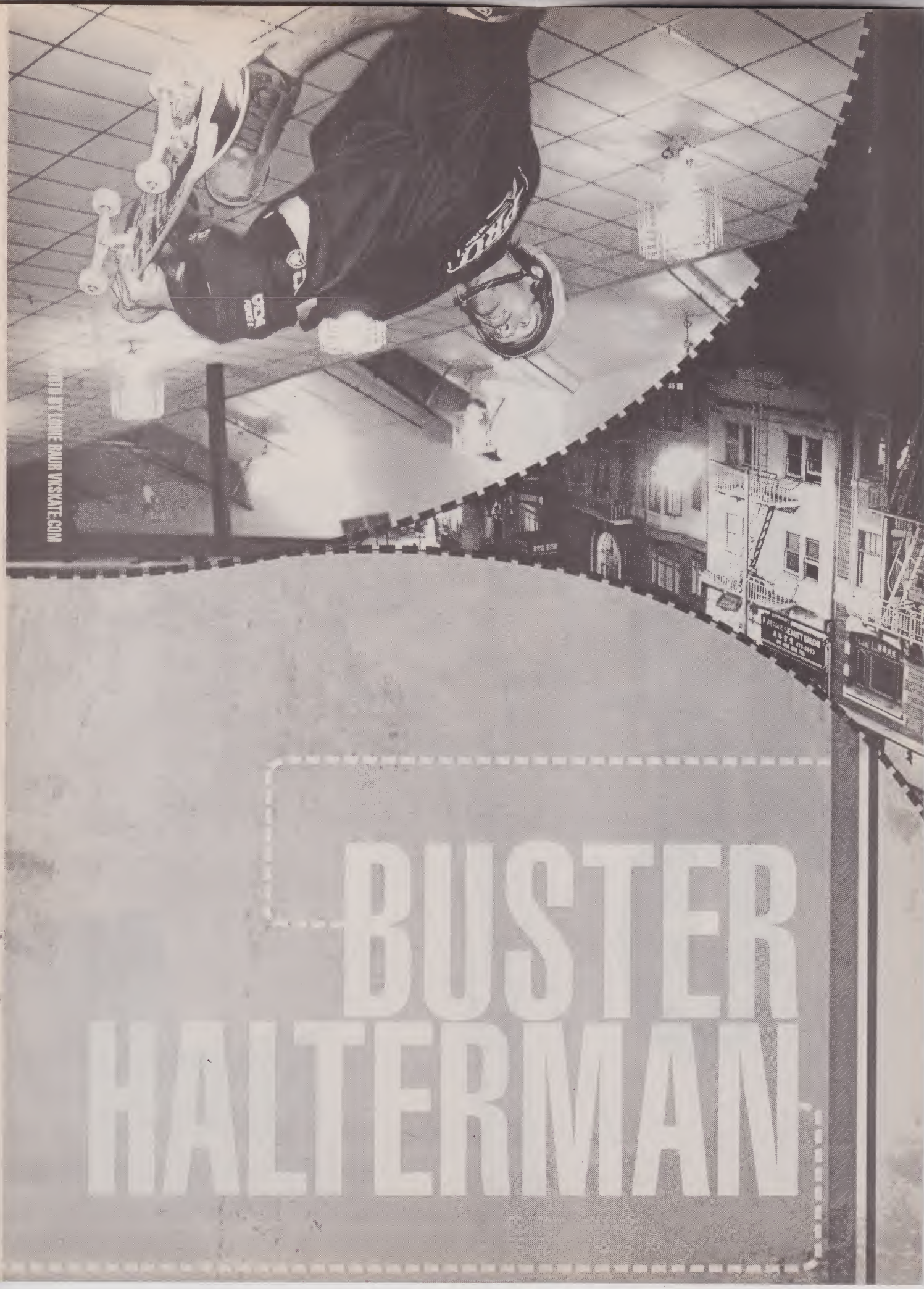
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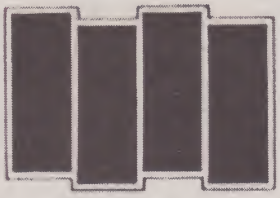

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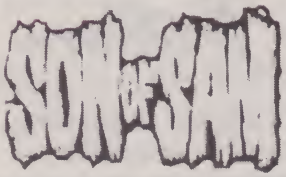

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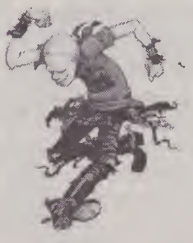

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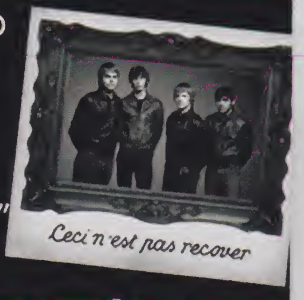

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